



**MEN
WHO DARED**

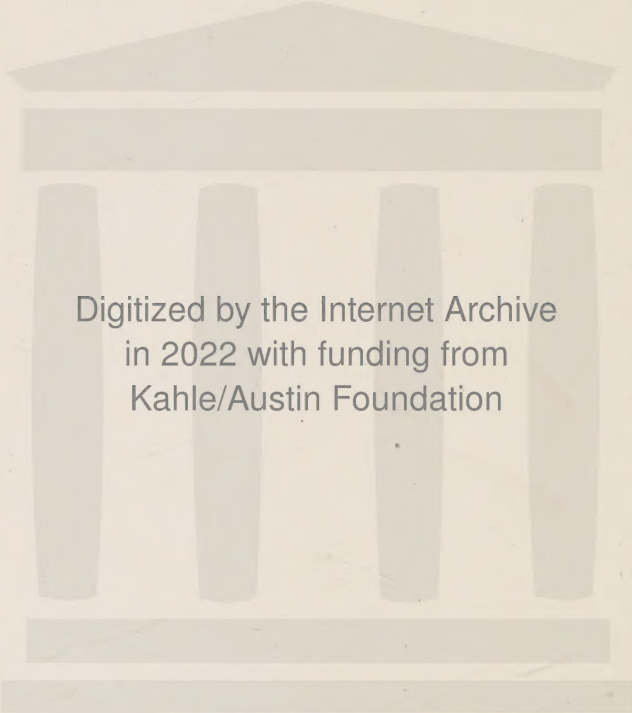
No

Charles McQueen

With Compliments and best wishes
from
the Author

Dyn E Ketch

June 5th 1910



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MEN WHO DARED

THE BRAVEST ARE THE TENDEREST,
THE LOVING ARE THE DARING.

—BAYARD TAYLOR.

BY
BYRON E. VEATCH

SECOND EDITION

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By
BYRON E. VEATCH.

TO ONE WHOSE FAITH AND CHEERY CONFIDENCE
HAVE BEEN A CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRA-
TION, THE WRITER LOVINGLY DEDICATES
THESE SKETCHES OF MEN IN WHOSE
VEINS THE BLOOD RAN RED.

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THE FIDDLIN' KID

“Feller comin’, comin’ fast, down the river trail.” With this announcement, Sandy, the cook, finished wringing out his flour sack dish towel, hung it carefully over the end of the mess box and, shading his eyes with both hands, took another long survey of the barren expanse which lay between our camp and the point where the river trail broke over the hill and wound downward to the lowlands along the stream.

The long July day was nearing its end and the lengthening shadows of the cottonwoods, which stretched across the narrow river and reached away toward the yellow sandstone buttes over there where the desert began, told the tired men that the brassy glare of the Arizona sun would soon give place to the pale splendor and the delicious coolness of an Arizona night.

It had been a hard day. The cattle were wild; the outside riders had made sixty miles and had been ten hours without water. A waterless ten-hour stretch means little to you city fellows, who spend your days in cool shops or offices, with a

water jug at your elbow; but ten hours in the saddle along the border of the desert, with the sun blazing from a cloudless sky and the reflected heat shimmering over the desolate expanse of sage brush and sand, till one seems to be looking across the surface of a vast gray-brown oven—that's a different story; that's Arizona, and it's as near hell as the average man cares to go.

But the day's work was over, the calf tally was all carefully marked down in the foreman's book, they had eaten ravenously and had drunk and drunk at the river, wishing with each drinking that they might drink more; and now ten very tired men lay resting under the cottonwoods. When the cow puncher is dog tired and full paunched he is not a loquacious citizen. As he lies full length upon the sand he smokes his pipe or chews his cud, too busy resting to talk or be talked to.

With this preamble, it may safely be stated that conversation was not at high tide in the Seven Bar camp on the Gila, that July evening away back in '82. If anyone had anything to say he didn't say it, leastwise not aloud—wisely storing up his effusion till some more auspicious occasion.

In such an atmosphere it may be imagined that when Sandy again drawled, "That feller's comin' here, I guess. He's ridin' a black hoss," his

statement awakened more of irritation than interest.

"Well, let him come. Who'n hell's stoppin' him?" snapped Fonda.

Sandy subsided and again silence held undisturbed sway in the Seven Bar camp.

Presently came to us the soft thud, thud of hoofs on the sand, and as the horse halted a few yards from the chuck wagon, a quiet, low-pitched voice asked, "Is the foreman of the outfit here?"

Not a man batted an eyelash or gave the slightest heed to the inquiry, each seeming to wait for another to act as host or spokesman. For a full minute the stranger waited, then again he spoke: "Who is the boss of this camp?" The words came quick, sharp and incisive as so many knife stabs. The voice was still low-keyed and bore no evidence of anger or impatience, but there was that in it which caused every eye to turn instantly to the speaker.

No one replying, the newcomer suddenly dropped his reins and in an instant his fingers were moving rapidly in the sign language.

"Damn if he ain't talking deaf and dumb at us," gasped Sandy, at which every man in camp roared joyously.

Old Bud McKlintock, the foreman, sat up and

with his Texas drawl grunted out: "What's eatin' yeh, Misteh man?"

"I want to see the foreman of this outfit," answered the stranger.

"Well, bub, if you will jest let your eyes feast on the God-like figger of the gent that's addressin' yeh, mebbe so you all will feel some better," replied Bud, as he slowly rose to his feet, hitching his gun around a little nearer the front. In Arizona it was always well to have one's irons ready for action.

The newcomer's face lighted with a smile, as he said: "Well, I'm glad you can talk; thought perhaps the whole bunch of you were dumb. I want a job; heard you were short-handed, and I have ridden ninety miles to see you."

The straight-from-the-shoulder manner of the stranger evidently impressed Bud, and also reminded him that the hospitality of the camp had not yet been extended.

"Uncinch and turn your brone into the band over the hill there, then come and eat a few. I reckon the job won't get away for a few minutes."

The stranger slipped from his horse in a manner which betokened a thorough familiarity with the saddle, and every man about the circle instantly recognized a fellow-craftsman. All sorts and conditions of men may learn to mount in fairly

decent style, but the puncher of the West knows more than any other rider on earth about getting out of a saddle.

As the stranger stood beside his horse it was seen that he was slightly above medium height, with erect and slender figure, a boyish-looking face, with frank, brown eyes, but with hard lines about the mouth which told of experiences beyond his years. Behind his saddle was strapped an oblong roll of blankets, from the end of which peeped a box or case of some dark wood.

"What yuh got in that there box, sonny?" inquired Fonda, as the newcomer laid the bundle carefully upon the ground.

"Why, that's his coffin," sneered Slater. "Didn't you know that these tenderfeet mostly carries their coffins with 'em in this country, so's to be sure of a decent buryin' in case of accident?"

Slater was the one man in camp cordially hated and feared by all, for he was known as a surly and dangerous fellow, who boasted of more than one notch on his gun.

It was not so much the nature of the remark as the taunting and insulting tone in which it was delivered that caused the stranger to turn and look long and steadily into the eyes of Slater, who lay a few feet distant.

“Don’t let a little thing like my funeral ceremonies worry you in the least; you probably won’t be there,” he said, quietly. And again there was an intangible something in his tone which seemed to mean more than the spoken words. Turning, he led his horse over the hill to the herd, and the two men exchanged no more words that night, though in that brief half minute was born a feud which should first smoulder, then burst into tragic flame.

After he had eaten, the stranger again approached Bud and said: “Now, how about that job?”

Bud, eyeing him carefully, drawled, “Kin yeh do a sure-enough man’s work, young feller? The Seven Bar outfit wants full-grown men, and the puncher who takes his orders from me generally knows that he’s been workin’.”

“I will do a man’s work and I want a man’s pay. If I don’t make good a week’s trial won’t cost you a white bean,” responded the youngster.

“Good enough. You jest pick six hosses from the stock herd in the mornin’ and I’ll see that you keep ’em from gettin’ too fat. What’s your name, Kid?”

“You called me Kid just now, so we’ll let it go at that. I’ll answer to ‘Kid.’” Thus he came,

and thus he was henceforth known as the "Seven Bar Kid."

Next day when the work began it was seen that he knew it from start to finish. He was amazingly expert with the rope, and within his week was dividing honors in lasso work with Slater, who was also an expert roper. It was evident to all that Slater hated the Kid from the start, and this rivalry in his own particular field made the older man more than ordinarily ugly and ill-tempered. Several times he had indulged in sneering remarks concerning the boy or his work, but was studiously ignored in his efforts to pick a row.

Every one was curious as to that long box and its contents, and several times the men had indulged in good-natured chaff concerning it, but the owner quite as good-naturedly evaded their questions with the reply that it contained papers and instruments, legal and otherwise; which pleasantry was wholly lost on most of them.

At the end of the week's probation Bud formally engaged the young man for the season and, to the surprise of all, showed his further appreciation of the boy's ability by making him assistant foreman, thereby supplanting Slater. Bud was the boss and no one questioned this move, most of the men conceding that the boy's all-around superiority deserved such recognition. Slater was

furious and, while he said little, he looked wicked, and his sneering comments on "pet yearlings" boded ill for the boy.

The Kid accepted his honors modestly, and the few orders he gave were spoken quietly and without the slightest indication of swell-head, all of which pleased the men and added to the discomfiture of Slater, who had predicted that the youngster would get toppy and had promised to comb him down upon the first opportunity.

We were working up the Gila, moving camp from six to ten miles daily, till presently we reached the high country where the river cut its way through the sandstone bluffs in a deep, narrow canyon. One evening as we sat about the camp fire—for, though the days were blazing hot, the nights were crisp at the greater altitude—we had been listening to Alec Stewart's story of salmon catching in the Scotch highlands, when Bud's "Sh—! Listen!" made every ear alert to catch the faint strains of distant music which seemed to come to us from the star-bespangled skies overhead. In the silence which followed men looked at each other for explanation; then Bud made a discovery; the Kid was missing.

"I'll bet a four-year-old that box of his'n is missin', too. Look in the mess wagon, Sandy." The box was gone and now we knew its mystery,

though why the Kid should so have concealed and guarded a fiddle we could not understand.

For a few minutes all was silent save the faint rustling of the night breeze through the mesquit branches; then again arose on the desert air the distant strains of a violin, as faint and elusive and far away as the notes of an Aeolian harp. The night wind hushed its whisperings, and now came to us, full and sonorous, though far away, the splendid harmony of Handel's "Largo." By common impulse the men moved noiselessly to the very edge of the chasm, for we now understood that, in order to escape observation, the Kid had slipped away and gone down a narrow stock trail into the depths of the gorge; where, alone and undisturbed, in the darkness and shadow of the canyon, all the yearning and hunger of his artist's soul was going out into the night with Handel's prayer. There was an interval of silence, then came floating upward the wondrous strains of Schubert's immortal Serenade. Infinitely sweet, those exquisite cadences touched the further recesses of the rocky gorge, then drifted upward and outward upon the night till each of those unlettered auditors knew through the echo in his own soul that he listened to the outpouring of a heart bowed down.

"I feel as if I was in the old church at home,"

whispered McGeary and, though no one made reply, each felt that Mac had voiced the common sentiment. Again there was a short silence, followed by Rubinstein's "Melody in F"; after which the mood of the player veered into sterner lines, and in the rapid notes of wild Hungarian airs the instrument voiced its angry protest. Never a false note or a discord came from the canyon, yet the harsh and strident tones told how the lad's spirit chafed and rebelled at conditions he might not readjust. There was more music of this sort; then once more the scene shifted, and softer notes told of a lighter mood, for into the violin's song had crept the carol of birds and the laughter of children, as we heard the lilting melodies of the Tyrol or the love songs of sunny Italy. Another silence, then from the depths arose the pathos of old Scotch airs, "Annie Laurie," "Auld Lang Syne," and the rest of them following in quick succession. When it came to "Robin Adair," Alec's breath came through his teeth in a half stifled sob, as he muttered, "God! me auld mither sang that to me many's the time!" And we knew that he had visions of a cotter's hut in the Highlands, and that the breath of the gorse and the heather was in his nostrils. After this we heard the quaint, crooning lullabys of our own Southland, at which old Bud choked a

bit and covertly drew his sleeve across his eyes. On and on sang the violin, its subtle witchery making player and audience alike unconscious of the waning night. Mellowed by the distance, the cathedral vastness of the chasm for hours sent up those strains of almost celestial sweetness, till it seemed that we surely listened to an angel chorus. At last, exquisitely plaintive, sad, and touching, came "Home, Sweet Home," a heart-break in every measure. Some of the preceding music had been rather over the heads of the listening punchers, but every man jack of them knew and could understand this, and each heart responded. As the violin sighed its benediction and good-night Bud whispered, "That's the finish, boys," and then, chastened and made better by the hallowed memories of other days, we slipped noiselessly back to the blackened fire. When the Kid crept to his bed a half hour later the dozen men were apparently sleeping soundly, and gave no sign that they had listened hungrily to every note of his long performance.

After this his movements were narrowly watched, and when, a few nights later, he was observed stealing away into the darkness, his direction was noted and a few minutes later we were creeping after him again to listen to that wondrous melody.

It was tacitly understood that our knowledge of his secret should be kept from him, as we felt that any disclosures would end the music. Slater was for blurting it out that we "knew all about that fiddlin' business, and that the Kid needn't sneak out of camp to scrape the old thing"; but Bud peremptorily ordered him to hobble his tongue, under pain of instant dismissal. And so, from time to time during the long summer, the Seven Bar outfit heard music such as is not given the puncher to hear.

A fortnight had passed since our serenade in the mountain gorge and we were once more on the plain, having worked down the opposite bank of the Gila, camping each night under the cottonwoods along the river. It was midday and we had bunched the cattle near the stream, waiting for a part of the roundup to arrive from the hills. Slater had dismounted and was lying on his back in the shadow of a stunted mesquit tree, his hands folded behind his wide sombrero. The Kid, leaving the herd, cantered in toward the stream, passing within a few yards of the recumbent figure. Suddenly he pulled his horse back upon its haunches, snatched his pistol from his belt and instantly fired, seemingly direct at Slater, as the sand flew in a cloud when the heavy ball struck near his head. The shot startled men and horses

alike and Slater's face was greenish-gray with fright and rage, as he sprang up, tugging at his gun, which had slipped far around upon his belt. "That's your game, is it?" he snarled, while the click of six-shooters in various hands showed that this apparent attempt at murder in the first degree found no favor with the Seven Bar men.

"Easy!" sang out the Kid, as he replaced his weapon; "I was shooting at your friend there." And then we saw at Slater's feet an enormous rattler, shot through the neck, writhing in its death agony. Through some accident it had lost its rattles and, unable to warn the unconscious victim, it had crawled up within ten inches of Slater's head, where it had coiled for the stroke.

"He had his head drawn back and was ready for business," continued the Kid, "so I didn't have time to write you a postal card that I intended to shoot; besides, if I had spoken, or you had moved, he would have socked it to you, sure." With evident bad grace Slater muttered his thanks.

"Do you most always shoot like that, Kid?" asked Bud. "Not always," the boy laughingly responded; "I should have hit the snake through the head, but I didn't wait to take very careful aim."

We had all seen the lightning-like movements of

the lad as he halted his horse, drew and fired; so as he rode off whistling, there were several men in the party, Slater among them, wondering how quick and how close that boy could shoot when he tried.

After the branding that afternoon McGeary banteringly suggested that every man in the outfit put up a dollar in a sweepstake pool and shoot for it; Bud, the foreman, to act as judge, referee and stakeholder. It was apparent to all that McGeary's play was to try out the boy, and to determine whether his killing of the rattler was merely a chance shot.

Every one assented save the Kid, who had slipped away and was busily engaged in shoeing one of his horses. When called to take part in the sport he shook his head and waved his hand for us to proceed without him. But when Slater tauntingly called out, "Say, girlie, if you ain't afeared of losing a whole dollar, you will set in for a hand at this game. You can't hold no records on that pop shot you made today," the Kid dropped the foot of that bronco as if it were a live coal, and, coming to where Bud stood, he threw his stake in the hat; then, turning quickly, he picked up an empty tomato can near the wagon and flung it high up in the air. As the shining target left his hand his pistol leaped from his hip,

and swifter than thought six shots followed each other into the blue. "I missed once; you will find five holes in it, I think," he said, quietly.

Upon examination the can was found twisted and torn out of all semblance of its original shape, but there were five distinct bullet holes in it.

"Gawd!" gasped Fonda, "he did that quicker'n you could say Amen with your mouth open."

Quickly reloading, the boy tossed another can upon the ground about twenty feet away, and again began firing rapidly. At the first shot the can leaped into the air, to alight a half dozen paces farther away; another shot as it alighted, and again the whirling target sprang up to fall still further off. With each crack of the pistol the dance of the can continued, till the last shot sent it over the river bank, fifty feet away.

"Get it, Sandy," commanded the Kid, "and if there's a shot hole in it you can have my share of the stake."

And so it proved. Not a shot had touched the rolling can, each one striking the earth directly beneath it.

Carefully wiping and reloading his pistol, the Kid started once more for his work, saying: "You fellows go on with your match; I've got to shoe that horse." As he moved away he turned to Slater. "I'm not claiming any records," he said,

“but I’ll shoot a match with you any time you like, and I’ll bet fifty to ten I’ll win. Want some of it?” Slater answered never a word, and the boy went on about his duties.

We were cow punchers; we knew gun play from A to izzard, but not one of us had ever before seen that sort of shooting, and forthwith there was born into that small community a wholesome respect for that slender youngster, even if he was a fiddler.

The long summer wore slowly away and with each passing month grew the popularity of the Kid, till he was the sworn friend of nearly every man in the outfit. Slater was the sole exception. As the lad grew in favor Slater’s venom seemed to increase, till it was apparent to all that he hated the youngster with the deep-seated and deadly hatred which needs only the leaven of opportunity to breed murder. More than once the Kid was warned to be on his guard, but he treated the warnings lightly, saying, “Don’t worry; that duck won’t tackle me openly, and he won’t dare strike from behind so long as I am among such good friends.” So he went about his duties, wholly ignoring Slater’s nasty and ill-tempered sneers.

The older man did not lack a certain quota of physical courage, but he was the more dangerous by reason of the cold-blooded and murderous

cunning which would prevent an open rupture with his enemy till such a time as all the advantages were with himself. Fonda put it to a nicety when he expressed the opinion that "Slater wanted to shuffle, cut, deal and then play both hands, so as to have a dead cinch on the pot."

Indian scares were frequent in the settlements, but thus far the vigilance of the military at Fort Bowie and Camp Thomas had frustrated anything like a concerted break on the part of the Apaches. We were ever on the alert for trouble, however, and no rider or ranchman ventured far without six-shooter and saddle gun.

At the end of October we had hunted the Gila Valley as far as our range extended, and now moved to the home camp in the foothills of Graham Mountain, midway between the river and the Southern Pacific railroad to the south.

Upon reaching the headquarters ranch we were surprised to find visitors. The Seven Bar Company was largely owned by eastern capitalists, and the heaviest stockholder had sent his invalid nephew out to spend a winter in Arizona. With the invalid were his young wife and their three-year-old baby daughter, Caroline, a beautiful, flax-haired little creature, as healthy and happy and full of life as a young squirrel.

As we rode up to the corral that evening she

wriggled from her mother's grasp and ran to meet us and "det atwainted," as she explained to Bud, who first greeted her.

As the men gathered about her she gravely shook hands with each, declaring that her name was "Taroline Wells," and that she was going to be a cowboy. When she came to the Kid she demanded his name. "I'm the Kid," he laughingly replied, as he took her proffered hand. "I want to kiss you, kid boy," said the tiny coquette. "Bless your dear little heart, you shall!" he cried, as he took her up.

The child snuggled close, put her arms about his neck and kissed him as she would had she known him all her short life. There were tears in the boy's eyes as he petted her and told her of a little girl he had once known whose name was Toodles, and he believed he should—yes, he was quite sure he should call her Toodles, also.

The little one shouted in glee at her new name, instantly accepting the sobriquet, and, though her mother was plainly disgusted, the name stuck and the child would henceforth answer to none other.

Within twenty-four hours every man of the outfit was Toodles' abject slave. They offered every sort of bribe for a kiss, but not one would she so favor save the Kid, though she was comrade to all.

Mr. Wells was a pale, studious chap, a decent enough fellow, but one having nothing in common with the men of the West; so we saw little of him or his wife. They were pleased, however, that the boys had made such a pet of their baby and allowed her to play about the bunkhouse by the hour.

A few days after our return to the home camp the difficulty between the Kid and Slater came perilously near to its solution. The boy kept his long box under the blankets in his bunk, and upon more than one occasion he was seen to take papers, evidently letters, from it, and once Alec had surprised him looking at a photograph, which he instantly suppressed, locking the box hurriedly and leaving the room with no remark. These things were talked over between the men when the Kid was not by, and much speculation was indulged in as to the contents, aside from the fiddle, of that mysterious box. One man determined he would solve the riddle, but, as he kept his own counsel, no one suspected his intention.

One day the Kid had ridden away soon after dinner to look up a band of saddle horses, ranging a few miles down the valley, which would soon be needed for the coming beef roundup. The trip would require several hours, consequently Bud, who was superintending the placing of fresh raw-

hide lashings on the corral, expressed surprise when the Kid cantered back a half hour later. He explained that he had forgotten something and, dismounting, walked toward the bunk house, followed by the foreman. It was through Bud, who heard it all, that we learned what followed.

As he reached the door the boy halted, as if suddenly frozen, then his hand dropped to his hip as he stepped inside. Slater had picked the lock of the long box and was looking intently at a photograph which he held in his hand. His back was toward the door and the noise of the boy's entry caused him to turn quickly, to look into the bore of a 44 and the blazing eyes behind it.

The Kid's voice was not raised in loud or violent protest when he spoke. On the contrary, his words came slowly and his tones were rather lower than usual, but each syllable seemed freighted with a death sentence.

"Drop it, you damned, sneaking hound! Drop it and get out. If I ever again find you meddling with my stuff, or if I hear of you talking of what you have read or seen in that box, I'll fill your hide so full of holes that it won't hold shucks!"

The photograph slipped from Slater's nerveless fingers and fluttered to the floor, as he edged toward the door, his eyes glued to the muzzle of the

gun which was pointed straight at his head. "Stop!" commanded the boy; "Pick it up and put it back in the box." Slater obeyed; then, dropping his head, sneaked out past Bud to the corral. He made no attempt at resistance; he had seen that gun in action and knew it would be sheer suicide to make any play at that time and under such circumstances; but he was consumed with silent fury and all that afternoon his face wore an expression that was not good to look upon.

When we heard the story we knew that the finish must soon come, and that one or the other of the two men would go out of business. To avoid a killing, and to give both of them time to cool off, Bud sent the Kid away on a four days' horse hunt.

It was very soon after his return that the inevitable collision happened, though it came about in a manner wholly unlooked for.

For more than a week, along the higher peaks of the range to the north, we had seen Apache signal fires by night and tall columns of smoke by day. We knew that deviltry was brewing, but thus far the Seven Bar outfit had never been molested and we hoped that our good luck might continue. The Apache, wise in his generation, unless in overwhelming numbers, rarely took chances in raiding a camp where there were a

dozen or more men, each one of whom carried an arsenal and knew how to use it.

Long immunity had made us careless, so we anticipated no danger when, on the morning after the Kid's return, Bud swung every rider about the place up into the hills back of the ranch on the first circle of the fall beef hunt.

It was late in the afternoon when we finally got our first drive safely landed in the upper corral, about a mile from the camp, and rode slowly down the bench to the main ranch buildings. We had reached the foot of the ridge and were about emerging from the fringe of mesquit trees which hid the corral and buildings from view, when there came to our startled ears a sound which drove the blood from every face and brought the entire party to an instant standstill. It was the scream of a man; a scream so shrill and piercing, so long drawn out and filled with mortal agony, that we were frozen with the very horror of it. Another short gurgling cry and all was still, save the pounding of our hearts within us. An instant later came the reaction and every man of our little party, his pistol out, had spurred into the open and was riding headlong toward the corral.

A glance told the story. In our absence the Apaches had raided the defenseless camp, and now fifty or more of the painted devils were scur-

rying around the farther corner of the main building, yelling and shooting at us as they ran.

Old Bud rose to the occasion, like the man he was, and, instantly divining all the strength and the weaknesses of our position, he called out, "Make for the bunk house, boys! it's nearest and safest." Not more than five hundred feet separated us from our goal, yet in that short ride at full speed two horses went down, their riders to finish the run on foot, and McGeary's reins dropped as the bullet from a 50-caliber Sharp's tore through his shoulder.

A few yards from the open door of the bunk house lay old Fong, the Chinese cook, his head split wide open and his queue missing. His was the blood-chilling cry we had heard.

Within twenty seconds we had reached the building, tumbled off our horses, hit them a savage cut with our quirts, which sent them tearing down the trail to the brush and safety, had pulled McGeary inside, and barricaded doors and windows.

The heavy oaken door and window coverings were ample protection against ordinary rifle fire, but when they were once closed we were completely shut in, with no outlook save through the narrow chinks between the windows and the adobe walls.

We had scarcely got inside when the Kid, his face white and drawn with anxiety, said: "Boys, we must find Mr. and Mrs. Wells and Toodles, if they are alive."

Not a sound could be heard from the outside, and the Kid ventured the opinion that when the savages fled to the further side of the main building they had kept on running for the thicket, several hundred yards distant. Bud and Fonda were wiser; they had fought Apaches before the younger man had grown out of knickerbockers, and they knew that the murdering thieves had simply taken cover near by, and would not be likely to leave before looting the buildings. The Reds knew that we were but twelve men, and as they outnumbered us five to one we were sure to hear from them before night.

At every window in the bunk room we watched through the narrow openings between the boards to prevent a possible rush on the door. Not an Indian was to be seen, and in the deathlike silence about the place the suspense grew intolerable as ten, twenty, forty minutes, an hour, passed by.

Again and again the Kid urged that we make a sortie to learn the fate of little Toodles and her parents, but Bud would have none of it. "What's the use, Kid?" he argued; "if the pore little thing and her people are dead, you can't help

'em none by rushin' out there and gettin' shot up; and if they're alive we'll find it out before dark, and then mebbe we can take a hand."

McGeary was the only man who seconded the Kid's plan. He had a nasty wound through the right shoulder and was bleeding badly, but he was chock full of fight and thought we should seek the little girl. "And furdernore," he added, grimly, "I can pump a six-pistol some with my t'other hand, and I'd like to have a few minutes' private conversation with that damn skunk that plugged me. I spotted him as he shot. He's got a yaller ring painted around his belly, and I want to cut him in two jest about an inch above that there ring."

The sun was scarcely an hour above the horizon when the curtain rang up on the last act of the savage drama; and never was scene more savagely staged.

A woman's piercing shriek, then the wailing cry of a child over toward the corral, told us that the woman and the little one were yet alive, and there was an instant rush to the peep holes opening in that direction.

From the larger building came two savages, dragging behind them by her long hair the mother, and following closely came another brave, clutching in his hand the child's golden curls, by which

he lifted her clear of the ground and swung her about his head, as one might swing a kitten.

Mr. Wells was being dragged forward by his feet, his head trailing in the dust and stones.

Alongside the procession strutted at least fifty painted bucks, their guns ready for instant use in killing us off, should we attempt the rescue they evidently anticipated.

Within a hundred yards of our shelter they tied the helpless and half unconscious man upright against the pickets of the corral and prepared for the burning, which is the *pièce de résistance* of every Apache massacre.

While we knew that before our very eyes was to be enacted a tragedy which would haunt each of us to his last hour, and that the life of a fellow-human being would go out, after the most unspeakable tortures which savage ingenuity could devise, it seemed madness for twelve men to attempt a rescue in the face of fifty rifles which were waiting for us the moment we left our shelter.

The Kid begged and pleaded with Bud that we should at least make the effort, and twice started to unbar the door for our exit, but each time Bud threw him back.

“It’s no use gettin’ killed jest for the sake of gettin’ killed,” he reasoned. “Them devils are

hopin' to get us to do the very trick you are asking for, and there ain't no manner o' sense in us helpin' them play their own game. They will kill that pore feller out there by inches, but we can't help him none."

"But the baby, Bud, the baby! They will kill little Toodles, too."

Bud's face went gray in the uncertain light of the room and his lips twitched as he said, "Mebbe not, Kid, mebbe not." But we knew he had no faith in his words.

The Indian who wore the yellow painted circle about his almost naked body seemed to be master of ceremonies, for he now proceeded to tear away the upper part of Wells' clothing, stripping him to the waist. Then they beat him mercilessly about the breast and shoulders, with bludgeons cut from the great cactus bushes which grew near by, each blow leaving hundreds of stinging needles in the quivering flesh; and they thrust the thousand-thorned leaves of the prickly pear against each cheek and to each ear, the long barbs penetrating deep and causing the blood to flow in tiny streams from a score of wounds.

At first the victim only shrank from the blows and uttered deep groans, but as the torture increased his courage gave way and he screamed aloud in his agony, the great, hoarse screams of

a man in direst extremity of physical suffering.

As the anguished cries reached us the Kid made another rush for the door, but a half dozen men barred his way and tried to calm him by pointing out how utterly useless would be the sacrifice of his life. He returned to the window, as if unable to keep his eyes away from the fearful sight.

By this time the cactus torture was ended, and the savages prepared to set on fire the straw and brush which they had piled close about the legs of the prisoner.

During the awful fifteen minutes which had thus far elapsed the wife had been held captive a few yards to one side, and had been forced to witness the frightful sufferings of her husband, while the little one, sobbing in terror, clung to her skirt.

Now, as the preparations for the burning were being completed, the woman broke away from her captors and, with piteous cries for mercy, ran forward to interfere in the fiendish work; but an Indian, he of the yellow band, tore her away and, striking her a brutal blow on the mouth, stretched her senseless upon the sand. Then, snatching up by one foot the little girl, who had followed the mother, the savage held the child for an instant head downward, while he brandished his knife aloft as if to rip the little body asunder; but, evidently thinking that this part of the butchery could

wait, he flung her beside the mother, unhurt but terribly frightened.

It was right then and there that the Kid seemed to go stark, raving mad. With a cry as wild as the Berserk call he landed in the center of the room, and thus he spoke: "You damned, cowardly whelps! what are you made of that you can stand here and watch a man and woman and that little innocent baby abused and tortured and killed, without lifting a finger to save them? Afraid of your worthless hides, are you? Afraid you might get hurt or killed if you opened that door and tried to do the manly thing for once in your lives! Suppose you do get killed? Suppose it was your child being butchered out there—wouldn't you expect any man, who pretended to be a man, to go out and be killed trying to save her? You fellows here in Arizona put up a hell of a bluff, carrying six-shooters and saddle guns and pretending you are killers, when, as a matter of fact, you are a lot of dirty yellow curs. Do you understand what I am saying? You are a lot of miserable, cowardly dogs, who haven't sand enough to make a fight, not even to save the life of little Toodles!"

There were angry remonstrances from the men, and an ominous click from the corner where Slater stood.

As quick as lightning the Kid's gun was out and covering him. "None of that, Slater! I came very near putting your light out four days ago, and I'll kill you where you stand if you make a move. Drop that gun back in your holster! If you want to shoot, come outside and place your shots where they may do some good." Then starting for the door, he said, "I'm going out to make a try for that little girl's life, and don't anyone get in the way, or I'll hurt him."

"Hol' on, Kid," called out McGeary, "I'm going with you."

"Me, too," came from nearly every man in the room. The boy had stung their pride and now they were eager to go out and get killed, if needs be, just to prove that they had not deserved the scathing rebuke.

The Kid's face lighted with a new hope, as he said, "Ah! Then you are men, after all. Now, listen, then act quick. As I watched through the window I figured out a plan. If we all go out and all do good shooting, we can down enough Apaches and scare the rest bad enough to make a quick rush for our people, and get back here again before the Indians can do us much damage. When the door is opened we want to go out in a hurry—remember that. Let the first six men out swing to the right, the last six turning to the left; keep

eight or ten feet apart, which will give us a line half as long as theirs. Then let each man fall flat on his belly and direct his fire at the Indians directly in his front. This will save both ammunition and time, by preventing a half dozen of us shooting at the same one. The two men who lead the squads will have the greater distance to cover before lying down. I'll lead the first six; Bud, you will lead the second."

While thus rapidly outlining his plan of battle, the boy had pushed five men in line near the door and, placing himself at their head, dropped the bar.

"Use your Winchesters till they are empty, and keep your pistols in your holsters for the last rush. Come on!" he shouted and, pushing open the door, he dashed out and, turning to the right, ran fifty feet or more to his station, where he threw himself forward upon the ground, and in an instant the "blim," "blim," "blim" of his saddle gun was making the music which brave men love to hear. Eleven men had followed him closely, and soon their guns were sending wireless messages into the hostile line.

Ah, those old 73 model Winchester carbines, or saddle guns, as we called 'em! Sawed off and stumpy, they were not handsome weapons, nor would they kill a bull moose at a mile, as is claimed

for modern rifles; but they carried in full magazine twelve 44 shells, and they would make an Indian awful sick at three hundred yards. History will record that it was these old saddle guns which gave the finishing touches to the taming of the West.

While the Apaches were expecting some sort of a demonstration on our part the Kid's tactics placed them wholly at a disadvantage, and they were playing a losing game from the first shot. At point blank range twelve desperate men were shooting at them, and shooting to kill. Within two minutes a score of them were down and the rest were running in full flight for the distant thicket, yelling as if all their devils were at their heels. As the savages fled we made a dash for the prisoners, the Kid in the lead. As he ran he was seen to stumble and fall; then, rising, he ran limping to poor Wells, and, cutting his bonds, pulled him away from the fire. The prisoner's legs were slightly scorched and he was suffering frightfully from the cactus needles, but was not dangerously wounded, and would recover.

In a few minutes all save McGeary were again indoors. He was busy giving the quietus to such of the savages as were still breathing, and incidentally having that "private conversation" with Mr. Injun of the yellow band, who, with a broken

back, lay squirming and snarling like a trapped coyote. It was a fearful retribution which Mac exacted for the hole in his shoulder and the brutal manner in which the ugly devil had abused little Toodles. It was a rough country of rough men, and McGeary was no gentler than his fellows; so I guess I won't tell how that Indian died. It wasn't a pretty sight.

We made some preparations for a possible night attack, but not an Apache showed up. They'd had enough of the Seven Bar outfit.

When all were safely housed the Kid, who was very pale, asked Fonda to pull off his left boot, which was found half filled with blood from a flesh wound above the knee. He called Bud to examine the wound, and then, pointing out that the bullet had entered from the rear, declared that he had been shot by one of our own party. "I think I know who did it," he added, significantly, "but we will talk about that later on. Tie it up and stop the bleeding; then get me to my bunk. I'm weak."

Every one knew what he meant and who he meant. There were dark looks at Slater, but he only smiled his ugly, sneering smile and said nothing.

We watched all that night, and at daybreak sal-

lied out to scout the neighborhood and to secure our saddle horses, which were found near by.

About eight o'clock Sandy called us to breakfast and we were talking excitedly over the events of the past evening, when the loud bang of a Colt's sent the lot of us pell mell toward the bunk house, whence the shot had come.

At the door stood Slater's cayuse, saddled ready for the trail, and just inside lay the man, pistol in hand, stone dead, with the black blood trickling from a bullet hole squarely between his eyes, and that murderous grin still on his face.

In his bunk sat the Kid, rapidly cocking and lowering the hammer of his six-shooter, laughing the while like an hysterical woman. One glance at his wide, staring eyes, from which the light of reason had fled, told us that the excitement and the fever from his wound had done their work, and that the boy was now little less than a maniac.

Taking advantage of our absence at breakfast, Slater had prepared for flight, and crept into the bunk house, intending to murder his victim in cold blood and then make a run for it. But he was far outside his reckoning.

"I saw him," shouted the boy, as laughing wildly he pointed at the dead man. "All night long I saw him, and I knew he would come. He was

coming to settle, and I was ready when his gun came around the corner of the door."

Incoherently he babbled on till Bud finally wrested the pistol from his hand, and by main strength laid him down in his bunk and held him there, motioning us meanwhile to carry the dead man away.

Slater had played his game in his own fashion and had paid the forfeit, quite to the satisfaction of every man in the outfit.

Fonda started post haste for Fort Bowie and before sunset had brought the doctor, who told us the Kid had brain fever and gave us little hope for his recovery.

Then for the first time we knew how much we loved that courteous, quiet-spoken, hard-fighting lad. We forgot and forgave the biting words with which he had lashed us the evening before, each of us ashamed that he had waited for this strippling to sting us into the action which had saved his little friend and her parents.

For a week it was touch and go with the boy, his life hanging by the merest thread, while we watched beside him and did all in our power to hush his ravings.

One morning, pale and haggard, after an all night vigil, the doctor came out, smiling. "It's all right," he said to Bud; "your second in com-

mand will pull through. The fever is broken and he is conscious.”

Old Bud sat right down on the ground and blubbered like a boy, and—well, he had a heap of company at it, too.

It wasn't long before the Kid was sitting up in bed, and presently he could hobble out on crutches and sit in the big room. Little Toodles was his constant companion and he spent hours telling her stories.

During his illness he had been pretty thoroughly discussed, and his wonderful talent as a violinist had reached the ears of Mrs. Wells. One evening as we sat about the fire she brought the long box and begged him to play; in which request we all joined. Bud explained that we had been surreptitiously listening to his music all summer and that there wasn't any use in trying to hide his light any longer. The youngster blushed like a girl when he learned that his secret was out; but he unlocked the box and brought out the fiddle, an instrument of exquisite lines and workmanship. Leaning back in that old camp chair, he snuggled the violin lovingly under his chin and once more we heard the angels' song. Divinely sweet and touching were the airs he chose that night; so filled were they with heart-hunger and longing that in fancy we could almost see, in some

far corner of the land, the home and loved ones he had known before the *wanderlust* had led him to Arizona, and a life which seemed so wholly out of keeping with his talents and his temperament. That he was a man with a past was more than evident, and it was into that past that his soul went journeying, as he played for us that night at the Seven Bar ranch. The lines about his mouth were strangely softened and tears glistened in his eyes as he finally put aside the instrument and, with never a word, hobbled away to his bunk.

Next day he told Bud that as soon as he was able to travel he was going away; going east, where he might remain for several months; but promised that when he returned to Arizona he would surely rejoin us. He fixed December 10th as the date of his departure, and as that was a fortnight away, we had much of his music before the time came.

It would never do to allow our comrade to leave us without a fitting send-off, so it was arranged that the entire outfit, including Toodles, should ride into Bowie to see him safe on the eastbound Southern Pacific train, which passed through late in the evening. The Wells family and the Kid were to go in the buckboard, the men, of course, on their ponies.

That last night we gathered in the big room and

listened to the parting song of the violin. But there was a new note in the music, a note of inspiration and joy and promise which we had never before discovered. And the Kid seemed changed, also. Never before had he appeared so graceful, so high bred and courteous as on that last evening.

As we rose to go to our bunks the Kid said, "Boys, this is our last evening together, perhaps for a long time, and before we leave this old room I want to thank each and all of you for your loyal friendship, and to shake you by the hand before we say good night. I've some writing to do, and you will doubtless be asleep before I come to the bunk house. I want to unsay all the ugly words I used the day of the fight, and to tell you that the best lot of fellows I've ever met are right here at the Seven Bar ranch."

We thought it a bit odd that he should want to say good night in this fashion, but he was a strange sort of chap anyway, so we gathered about him as we passed out, and each of us gave him a hand grip that meant something.

As we left he turned to the table and, unlocking his box, took out his papers and begun writing. That was the last time we ever saw him.

We were to start for Bowie at eight o'clock in the morning, but when we tumbled out at day-

break the Kid was gone. His bunk had not been occupied, and on the table lay a letter addressed to Bud. It read:

"Dear Old Bud:

About the time you are reading this letter I shall be taking the early morning train at Bowie.

Don't think me ungrateful, or that I have not appreciated to the full the comradeship which prompted you and the boys to ride with me tomorrow and to see me safely started upon my journey. The fact is, I couldn't stand a leave-taking of that sort, so I am writing this letter to say a last good-bye, and when it is finished I'll take my pony and start alone.

I am going back to the old life, a life wholly separate and apart from the one I've been living for the past four years. When I left it, I said in my pride that it should be forever; but no man may safely declare what he will or will not do. A month before I came to you I received a letter, and it is that letter which has finally turned my footsteps homeward. It is from my mother, my dear, old, white-haired mother, and I have read it a hundred times during the past five months. It lies open before me as I write these words, and seems to be beckoning me back to her side. Listen, while I read to you just a little of it:

'Come back to me, my boy. Put aside the cruel pride which has so long separated us; forget the wrong and the injustice which you have suffered at the hands of those who have since passed into the shadowy land, where your pride and your resentment can no longer reach them, remembering only that it is your mother who calls you to come. I am old and my head is bowed with weight of days; soon, mayhap, I shall lie me down to the last sleep, and ere I go, the mother love within me demands its own, and I would once more clasp to my heart my last born. A mother's arms are open; will you not come, to be her staff and her support through the few days or years which remain to her?'

This is the letter I have read and re-read so many scores of times during the past summer. I had sworn that I would never again return to the old life, for I bitterly resented the injustice which drove me forth, a boy, into the world, and finally landed

me in Arizona. But as I lay in the fever which followed the fight I traveled far and learned much, and I know that through all my troubles the heart of that sainted old mother was stanch and true. And now, I am going back to her; and in returning I realize that I must cut every tie and that this life must be as a sealed chapter, as a leaf turned down, for she would never understand it. The knowledge that I had killed men—albeit the killing was done in defense of my own life—would break her heart and sadden her last days. It is for this reason I am not telling you my name or the whereabouts of my home. I will pass out of your lives even as I came—The Kid—and it is thus I would have you remember me. There will be times when the voice of the desert will call to me, and my heart will hunger for the loyal souls I am leaving here; then I will take my violin and send my thoughts and my greetings to you, as you sit by the camp fire along the Gila.

Good-bye, Bud, old man, and good-bye to the boys, one and all,
and dear little Toodles. Yours,

KID."

Bud read the letter aloud. For a few minutes there was blank silence, then Fonda said it all:

"If I could write a letter like that, or if I had an old mother back in God's country, I wouldn't be bustin' no broncos nor chasin' no man's cows. That Kid was a plumb dreambook, anyway; and couldn't he jest natchelly make a fiddle rear back on its hind legs and preach?"

"Likewise, he could shoot a few lines, too," added Mac.

"He shore could," said Fonda.

THE TWO SAMURAI.

It was in the autumn of 1904 that the Colonel told the story; Colonel M—, who, with his seventy years, his snowy hair and imperial, was yet as ruddy of cheek and as gallant of bearing as when in the old days he led the —th Cavalry through the deserts of the west. Since his retirement his home was at the Army and Navy Club, where his charming little dinners and his unfailing wit and eloquence as an after-dinner speaker made this courtly old warrior the most sought for man about the capital.

We had dined with the Colonel that evening, and as we entered the Club smoking rooms, we overheard fragments of an animated conversation between two naval officers, who were debating the probable movements of the United States battleship squadron, in case the feud between Japan and Russia should involve other nations. The relative strength of the Japanese and Russian navies, both as to material and personnel, was also under discussion. In support of some claim as to Japanese superiority, one of the navy

men took up an encyclopædia, from which he read the following:

“SAMURAI—A term designating the feudal or governing class of old Japan; the ruling families from which the fighting clans were organized; a fighting man.”

We found seats in the farther corner of the room and, after a few moments of silence, the Colonel remarked in the musing tone which always promised a story, “I once knew a Samurai; two of them, in fact; one to the manor born, the other a Samurai by adoption.”

“Unlimber and get your range, Colonel, we are ready,” remarked Sanderson of the Artillery, who would talk shop.

The old man smiled indulgently, and settling himself deeper into the big leather chair, replied, “Well, if you youngsters care to listen, and will allow an old fellow to tell his tale in his own fashion, you shall hear of the Samurai I have mentioned, two of the bravest men I ever met, and I have known several.

“At the close of the rebellion, after being mustered out as captain in the Tenth New York Cavalry, I re-entered the service as a lieutenant in the Fourth Regulars, and was at once ordered to Fort Sill. This was in '65, and for the next fifteen years we earned every dollar Uncle Sam

paid us, and incidentally rode our horses over some millions of square miles of his territory, between the Brazos and the Big Horn. It was scout and fight, winter and summer; no big affairs, you understand, but a row of some sort going all the while, for the Indians were ugly and required lots of licking to keep them on their reservations. April 5, 1880, I was transferred to the ——th Cavalry, and, as ranking captain, assumed command at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, a three-company post only a few miles from the Sonora border.

“It was a favorite pastime of the reds, for small parties of a dozen or twenty, to break from the reservation at night and, after raising sundry and divers varieties of hell, to slip across the border and take refuge in Mexico, sneaking back to their tepees after the flurry of pursuit was over.

“It was the first day after I assumed command that I took my own troop out on the parade ground, put them through their paces and gave them a thorough looking over, to see what sort of an aggregation I had inherited. They were a rollicking lot of lads, not pretty to look at, but comfortable fellows to have at one’s back when going into a scrimmage, as I learned upon more than one bitter day in the months that followed. After

a few evolutions I felt, rather than saw, what they needed; they wanted a master; wanted a leader whose word should be to them the law and the gospel, from Proverbs to Revelations, and by Gad, sir, they found their man right there and then. Half of them didn't seem to know how to obey a command, and the other half didn't appear to be in any particular hurry. My subalterns, too, were apathetic, and inside of ten minutes I knew that my work was cut out for me, if I expected to make anything of Troop C.

"The only man in the company who seemed to know the game and want to play it by the book, was the First Sergeant. I spotted him at once, and noticed that he not only understood and instantly obeyed a command, but that he mentally anticipated it, which showed me that he was letter-perfect in tactics.

"I didn't waste a great deal of time in letting them know the lay of the land. As they wheeled into line by fours, the order was 'Halt, Company front!' and then, riding very slowly, I passed down the line and over the head of his motionless horse I looked squarely through each trooper's eyes and down into the sub-cellar of his immortal soul. At the end of that slow riding I knew my men, and they knew that I knew them.

"From that moment began the upbuilding of

Company C, and before six paydays had passed it was the best drilled, best natured, hardest fighting troop that ever swung the sabre or followed the guidon.

“As the Company broke ranks I could see that the men were speaking eagerly among themselves, evidently discussing their new ‘Old Man.’ I had my eye on that First Sergeant, and after stables that evening I sent an orderly for him. A few minutes later he strode up to the open door of my quarters, saluted and stood at attention, waiting while I looked him over from end to end. He was a soldierly looking chap, square shouldered, well set up, long of limb and slender, and looked as hard as iron. But it was at his face that I looked longest. It was not a happy face—some great sorrow or great disappointment had left its shadow there—but it had character written all over. Prominent cheek bones, a good nose and chin, with deep set gray eyes, that looked at a man, not past him. For a full minute he stood quietly returning my gaze, with never a flinch nor the tremor of an eyelid.

“ ‘What’s your name, Sergeant?’

“ ‘Reynolds, sir.’

“ ‘How long have you been in the service?’

“ ‘Nearly three years, sir.’

“ ‘Step inside, Sergeant, I want to have a talk with you.’

“As he passed the threshold he removed his hat, and right there his Captain came very nearly committing an unpardonable breach of discipline, for the impulse came over me to get out of my chair and offer the gentleman a seat. For Sergeant Reynolds was a gentleman, as one could see the instant his hat came off and that magnificent forehead appeared in evidence. His was a splendid head, and every line of his face and brow bore the unmistakable stamp of intellectual force and honesty of purpose. Why was such a man as this serving as a private soldier in the regular army? I was distinctly rattled for a minute, and in the little silence which ensued I found myself speculating as to what queer turn of Fate’s fickle wheel had brought him there. Such cases were not infrequent, and many an interesting identity lay concealed under Uncle Sam’s army blue. But whatever had been his past, I felt sure he was the one man in the company who could be of most assistance in bringing the troop up to concert pitch, so I went straight to the point by saying, “Sergeant, Troop C requires some good, hard drill and better discipline. The men need a little ginger and soldierly spirit infused into them, and a man in the ranks, who

has his heart in the work, can prove himself of invaluable assistance to his officers in bringing about the desired conditions. I had an eye on you this afternoon and, if I am not mistaken you know your business. Your captain is going to depend on you to help him round the troop into shape, and, willingly or unwillingly, you're going to give him that help. I sent for you to tell you this and to know whether you will do it because you want to, or because you have to.'

"Quick as a shot came his reply, 'Both, sir.'

"There was a faint smile on his lip and a pleased look in his eyes which told me that my First Sergeant was mine. I dismissed him without further questioning, for I felt intuitively that no casual inquiry would secure Sergeant Reynolds' real history, much as I wanted it. A few minutes' private and pointed conversation with each of my lieutenants that evening, and I was ready for the siege of drill which began the following day. Lord! How I did work those fellows for the next week or two. The men grumbled and kicked, as is the soldier's prerogative, but they worked. Hennessy, the biggest, brawniest trooper of the lot, probably voiced the general sentiment, when one hot afternoon he unburdened himself to Reynolds.

" 'What do yez make av it, Sargint? Is this

a rest cure that the dear Captin is thryin' on us? Be dad, I'd rayther be diggin' post holes in the stony corner of hell than workin' as a hoss sojer unther that man! Sure, me liver is jolted loose and the seat of me panties is wore out entoirely with this ridin' and chargin' up and down the lanscape from mornin' till night. I've dhrilled and dhrilled till the dam thing has gone to me head, and I find mesself dhrillin' in me slape. There's wan good thing about it, thank Hivin, the ould divil is takin' his own medicine, for he's dhrillin' wid us.'

"And so it was. I took my share of the drudgery, but it paid, for the troop began immediately to show improvement. Reynolds' influence in the ranks was soon apparent, the men showing more and more interest as the days went by.

"One evening an ambulance from Benson brought in the long delayed mails, and as the leathern pouches were tumbled out the men gathered about, eager for news from the San Carlos Agency, where a break was rumored. On the seat beside the driver sat a young man in civilian dress, unmistakably a foreigner.

"'Who's your friend, Bill?' sang out one of the crowd.

"'Recruity,' answered the driver, with a grin;

'a gent from Japan who is stuck on soldierin' and has come out here to get some.'

"A delighted yell came from the boys, as they closed in and began reaching for the newcomer.

" 'If the lady wud put her fut in me hand, I'd be proud to assist her to land in Huachuca,' said Hennessy, as he grabbed the stranger by the coat collar.

"The little fellow laughed at the reception, and without an instant's hesitation stepped into Hennessy's hand, then to his shoulder, and, springing lightly over the surprised trooper's head, landed safely on his feet. It was neatly done, and his evident good nature caught the crowd.

" 'Bully for the Mikado!' 'Hooray for the Jap!' chorused the men, as Hennessy, nowise abashed, took the newcomer by the arm and moved off toward the quarters. Several others, scenting a lark, hurried forward to take a hand, but Hennessy waved them off. 'Lave go,' he said, 'I saw it first.'

"I beckoned the driver to me and inquired concerning the stranger.

" 'Don't know nuthin' about him, sir, 'cept he tackled me as I was leaving Benson, and finally made me understand he wanted to come here; offered me a five dollar gold piece to let him ride, and here he is. Says he wants to learn to be

“ ‘Merican sojer,’ but he don’t savvy United States, not a little bit.’

“I turned to Reynolds, who stood near, telling him to give the Japanese something to eat and then bring him to my quarters. It would never do to leave him with that lot of unredeemed pagans who had him in tow, as they would haze him mercilessly. I mentally decided that he would be sent back to Benson by the ambulance returning next morning. An hour later I saw Reynolds and the Jap coming up the company street, the little fellow trotting along beside the tall trooper, talking excitedly and smiling as if thoroughly delighted with the situation. As they reached my verandah, Reynolds saluted and said, ‘Here he is, sir.’

“ ‘Who is he, and why is he here?’ I asked.

“ ‘A Japanese, sir; been in America only a few weeks, and came from San Francisco here to enlist. Says he wants to be a cavalryman. He is twenty-three years old, belongs to a distinguished family, and his name is Izo Yamato.’

“ ‘How comes it that he has been able to tell you so much? I understood from the driver that he speaks little or no English.’

“ ‘He speaks very little English, sir; his conversation with me was in his own language.’

“ ‘In Japanese? Where in God’s name did you learn Japanese?’

“ ‘I lived in Kobe for several years, sir.’

“ ‘Um! well, you understand, of course, that he cannot enlist here. He must first go to some recruiting station and pass an examination, which he couldn’t do, both on account of his size and his lack of English. Take care of him tonight, Reynolds, and we will send him back to Benson tomorrow.’

“All this time the Jap had not once taken his eyes from my face, eagerly watching every movement and gesture I made. Suddenly, as he seemed to understand that I had refused his request, he stepped before me, and drawing himself up to his full height, he declared proudly, ‘Me Samurai.’

“I looked at Reynolds for explanation.

“ ‘He says he is a Samurai, sir, which, translated into English, means that he is a fighting man.’

“I laughed outright, while the smile on the little Jap’s face broadened perceptibly, as he spoke a half dozen quick, snappy sentences in Japanese to Reynolds.

“ ‘He says he doesn’t expect to draw pay, sir; he has ample funds, and only wants to learn American soldiering.’

“I couldn’t do anything for him in that line,

and told Reynolds so. A quick shadow of disappointment passed over the youngster's face, as Reynolds translated my words, and I really felt sorry for him. He was a handsome little chap, about five feet four, deep-chested, stocky and muscular, a sort of a big little man, when one came to look him over. He had jet black hair, laughing eyes, and, while his features were somewhat after the Oriental type, he really looked more like a Portuguese or some south Europe breed than a Japanese. After some further talk I dismissed them, fully determined to send him out of camp the following morning—but he didn't go.

“Just before taps Reynolds came to me again to ask that his new friend be permitted to remain at the post for a time, explaining that the Jap would furnish his own equipment, and that the government would be reimbursed for the rations he consumed. He urged the case so strongly that I finally inquired what personal interest he had in the matter. At first he seemed loath to explain, but it finally came out.

“‘Frankly, sir, I want his society. I haven't a real friend in the troop; of course, I get on well enough with the boys, but they are an illiterate lot, and it's fearfully lonely here at times, having no one to talk with. Young Yamato is an educated gentleman, and it would afford me infinite pleas-

ure to have him with me, to teach him and to have him as my friend.'

" 'But the men will devil the life out of him, and you will have a constant fight on your hands if you propose to protect your friend.'

" 'I don't think they will trouble him much, as they come to know him better, sir, and he will require no protection.'

" 'Why, Reynolds, that big Hennessy has already marked him as his victim. He will surely haze the life out of the little cuss.'

" 'That's Yamato's affair, sir. I trust you will permit him to remain at the post; if he can't stand the gaff, then he will leave.'

" 'Reynolds, I want to ask you some questions altogether foreign to the subject in hand; questions you needn't answer unless you see fit. You are a man of education and refinement; you know more about matters military than a man in your station is supposed to know; you are more familiar than your officers with the latest text-books on tactics. Were you ever at the Point? How came you to be a private in the service? What is your history, anyway?'

"It was brutal, the manner in which I fired those questions at him, taking a mean advantage of his position as petitioner to pry into his private

life. I was ashamed of it as I put the questions; I was more ashamed when his answer came.

“Quickly the color rose to his cheek, then gradually receded, leaving him deadly pale, as he slowly replied, ‘Captain M., the rehearsal of a most unfortunate and unhappy history could not in any manner be of interest or profit to you. I have never been at West Point, and my training has been more naval than military. I am here because it appears to be the best place for me, and while here I have tried to perform my duties faithfully. That’s all I care to say, sir, and I trust you will respect my reticence.’ The gray eyes were looking fearlessly into mine.

“It was a merited rebuke, delivered like a gentleman.

“‘Right, Sergeant, your history is your own property. You may keep the Jap, and if you need a friend, come to me.’

“There was a suspicious brightness in his eyes and the faintest tremor in his voice as he wrung my proffered hand, saying, ‘Thank you, Captain, I’ll not forget this.’

“So Yamato remained at the post, the ward and pupil of Sergeant Reynolds. The men attempted some horse-play with him the first day or two, but as Reynolds let it be known that the Jap was his friend, no one cared to carry the fun-

making beyond prudent limits. They were very curious, however, and asked the Sergeant all sorts of questions concerning his protégé, to which they received evasive but good natured replies. Big Hennessy finally cornered the Jap and proceeded to catechise him.

“ ‘How ould are yez, Chink?’ ”

“ ‘Me have of the years twenty-three,’ replied the lad with his everlasting smile.

“ ‘Twenty-three! Sure, ’tis a big boy ye are gettin’ to be; if yez kape on growin’ at the prisint rate, yez will be a full grown man in thirty or forty years more,’ and the Irishman guffawed uproariously.

“ ‘Well, me big man, what did yez do for a livin’ in the ould counthry? Did yez wheel the baby waggin and do other light dry nursin’, or was ye head push in a laundry?’ ”

“Not understanding, the Jap shook his head.

“ ‘Hennessy tried again. ‘What business were yez in? What did ye work at?’ ”

“ ‘Extending himself to his full height, with great dignity the Japanese replied, ‘Me no work; in my countree me gentleman; me Samurai.’ ”

“ ‘Samoory, eh? What particular sort av a bug is a Samoory, anyhow?’ ”

“ ‘Him no bug; Samurai ees one man of the fight.’ ”

“ ‘Whoop!’ yelled the big trooper derisively, then raising his voice till he could be heard from end to end of the company street, he shouted, ‘Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! all ye fighters of Company C come a-runnin’ with yure hats in yure hands, and do riverince to a rale live Samoory from the far east.’ Then as the boys gathered about, he made a profound obeisance before the surprised Jap, and resumed. ‘Gintlemen, dhrunkards, short-card min and sojers! ’Tis me pleasure to inthrojuce to yez me distinguished frind and contimporary, Mister Samoory, av Japan, who has confidentially imparted to me the information that in his own counthry he was known as a fighter from way back, a hell of a feller, so to spake; and be rayson of his ability as an all roun’ scrapper, the King gave him the title of “Sammy, the Fightin’ Man.” All mimbers of Troop C will now take warnin’! Yez will plaze kape off the grass when Mister Sammy is awake. Hospital accommodations will be provided for thim as forgit themselves. Form in line now, ye divils, and extind the right hand of fellowship to Mister Sammy, who has thraveled all the way to Americky to be showin’ us the fine points av the game.’

“The Jap looked puzzled, but as those overgrown children lined up, each in turn extending his hand, the smile broadened and the black eyes

fairly beamed with pleasure. This ceremony ended, the boys gave three rousing cheers for 'Sammy, the Fighting Man,' the fun was over, and henceforth he was 'Sammy' to one and all.

"When Reynolds returned later in the day Sammy delightedly told him of Hennessy's kindness, and the great honor conferred upon him by Troop C. Reynolds did not disillusion the boy, but, later on, quietly told the men that, while they might guy the Jap and have fun with him, it would not be wise to carry it too far. They assumed by this warning that Reynolds would resent any undue imposition upon his friend; not once did it occur to them that Sammy was amply able to care for himself; but their enlightenment was yet to come.

"Sammy's fitting out and equipment furnished no end of fun for the men. He wanted everything necessary to a 'Merican Soldier of the Horse,' and, as he was amply supplied with gold, he soon had his tent, blankets and weapons. From some unknown source the boys dug out an old, rusty cavalry sabre, which he hailed with evident delight and which he at once proceeded to scour and polish till it shone like silver. Then he ground and whetted and sharpened the old blade till it was keen as a razor. In vain the men explained that the laws of war prohibited a sharpened

sword. 'Me want him for cut,' was his only reply, as he went on whetting till the old steel would have split a hair. Then he took his sabre to the blacksmith and requested that he file off the basket, or hand guard, leaving a plain, straight, unprotected hilt. 'Me like him better; same like in my countree,' he explained.

"It was in securing a horse that he had greatest difficulty. Not being an enlisted man, he could not be permitted to use a government mount, nor could he purchase a horse from Uncle Sam. After a private conversation with Mexican Joe, the proprietor of one of the low grogeries just outside the lines, Mr. Hennessy announced that he had heard of a fine saddle horse for sale by a Greaser a few miles down the valley, and, if his friend Sammy so desired, the horse should be brought up to cantonments on the morrow. Next day a Mexican led a piebald, white-eyed broncho into camp, and within five minutes departed hurriedly with fifty dollars of Sammy's gold in his pocket. It was a bay and white pinto which Sammy had acquired; round-bodied, long-barreled, with flat, muscular legs and a depth of lung space indicating great staying power, but with a Roman nose and the restless white eyes which told unmistakably of a 'spoiled' saddle horse. Evil lurked in every movement of the slender, pointed ears, and

looked boldly out through those wicked eyes. He was one of those untamed and unbreakable specimens of horseflesh occasionally found in the great west.

“ ‘Come, min,’ said Hennessy briskly, ‘lay hold and help the gintleman to mount his new calico horse,’ and taking the rawhide lariat in his hand, he advanced toward the pinto’s head to adjust the bridle; then leaping suddenly back, as the brute’s teeth snapped together dangerously near his arm, he swung overhead the bridle with its heavy bit, landing it with considerable force between the white eyes.

“ ‘Whoa! ye murdherin’ divil, have ye no sinse of dacincy? ’Tis yure new masther, the fightin’ man av Japan, who is to ride yez.’

“A dozen willing hands assisted in getting the bridle and saddle in place; then Sammy, who probably had not been astride a horse a dozen times in his life, stepped forward and clambered into the saddle.

“ ‘All set! shouted Hennessy, as Sammy took up the reins; ‘lave go! the Arizony circus will now begin.’ And begin it did; for no sooner was the maddened brute released than he lunged wildly into the air, alighting with a sickening jolt upon his forefeet, while his hinder part shot skyward. Sammy’s hat flew in one direction and his

six-shooter in another, as he clutched frantically at the saddle and endeavored to recover the stirrups which were sailing about his ears. First to the right, then to the left pitched the horse, the men yelling in sheer delight, 'Stick to him, Sammy!' 'Go it, Calico!' etc. It lasted less than ten seconds, during which time Sammy was all over that Pinto horse, traveling from end to end with each sudden unseating; first behind the saddle, then in front of it; clinging desperately first to one side and then the other, as Calico swayed to and fro, like a drunken ship, in the effort to discharge his shifting ballast. The rider had lost the reins, and the horse, without guide or hindrance, his head far down between his forefeet, his back bowed into a squirming knot of muscle, landed with a particularly vicious jolt that shot Sammy into the air, where he somersaulted to a landing in a bunch of bristly soapweed, the breath completely jarred out of him. For a half minute he lay still, and then as the laughing soldiers gathered about, he slowly straightened up and started toward the pinto, who stood with ears perked forward, suspiciously eyeing his fallen rider. The boy was badly shaken; a thin line of blood from his nose showed red on his white lips, as he unsteadily grasped the rope and warily edged his way to the horse's head. Once within

reach his right hand clamped the panting nostrils, while his left gripped an ear; there was a quick, downward pull, an inward push, a sudden upward twist, and Calico lay floundering on the ground with Sammy sitting on his head. So quickly was it accomplished that not a man of them could have told how it had been done. Sammy was smiling again, as he sat quietly till the beast ceased its struggles; then, getting up, he allowed Calico to scramble to his feet. The white eyes were blazing now and the horse swung his head and squealed angrily as the Jap moved in. Again that iron grip upon nose and ear, the sudden pushing twist, and once more the horse fell heavily, his hoofs impotently threshing the air. Twice more the pinto was permitted to rise, and twice more he was ruthlessly thrown, the last time that awful grip holding to his nose till poor Calico was well nigh dead for want of breath. When Sammy arose the fourth time the horse lay still, and it required a vigorous kick to bring him to his feet, his legs trembling unsteadily beneath him, and for the first time in his life those white eyes showed abject fear. Sammy walked straight to his head, patted the dusty neck, put the reins over, then deliberately and awkwardly climbed into the saddle and rode slowly down the street. Calico was licked! licked to a finish! You should have heard

the boys cheer the little Jap as he rode back a few minutes later. When asked how he threw the horse so easily, he smilingly told them 'Jiu Jitsu,' the science of wrestling as practiced in his country. It was a marvelous exhibition of strength, intelligently applied.

"Reynolds had seen it all, yet no word escaped him till after the horse had been stabled; then he patted Sammy on the shoulder and spoke a few words in Japanese, which caused the boy's face to light with satisfaction and his hand to seek Reynolds' with a quick grip.

"The two were inseparable; under Reynolds' careful tutoring Sammy made rapid progress in English, though some words he never did get straight. He learned to ride, too. When the men were at drill he watched every evolution, listened to every order. He begged so hard, and seemed so anxious to learn, that I finally allowed him in the ranks, a soldier serving without hope of pay or preferment, but as gallant a soldier as ever drew rein, as you shall hear later on.

"He got on famously with the men. Of course, they guyed and chaffed him, all of which he accepted good-naturedly, so long as they kept hands off. He would permit no one to hustle him or indulge in any horse-play. One of the men attempted to man-handle him one day, when Sammy

grappled with the fellow and threw him over his shoulder so violently as nearly to break the man's neck. After that they respected his edict of 'hands off.' His thirst for knowledge seemed insatiable. Like a shadow he followed Reynolds; ever his eager questions, sometimes in English, more often in Japanese, as to *why* or *how*, receiving the tall trooper's reply in kind. It was about three weeks after his arrival that Sammy had his first trouble, which came about in this wise.

"Hennessy, who was a roistering, good-natured fellow when sober, but a quarrelsome brute when in his cups, had spent the afternoon at Mexican Joe's dive, and returning to camp in the evening, was fighting drunk and hankering for trouble.

"It so happened that the tent occupied by Sammy stood at one end of the adobe building in which Hennessy bunked, and the latter, to reach his door, must pass within a few feet of the little Jap, who sat cross-legged on the ground at the open flap of his tent, tinkering at his equipment. Some evil spirit prompted the drunken Irishman to bait the Japanese, for he stopped, and with an ugly leer commanded the boy to get up and get him a cup, as he proposed to initiate all stray Orientals about the camp into the mysteries of American tanglefoot.

“ ‘Get up, ye sawed-off haythen, and bring me the cup, before I spit and dhrown yez.’

“Sammy smiled and went on fixing his buckle.

“ ‘Didn’t yez hear me, ye naygur? I’ve a mind to take on a body sarvint in me ould age, and as yure so dam purty and so smilin’-like, yez have been elected by a most overwhelmin’ majority as striker to the Honorable Tim Hinnissy, and I’ll start yez in proper by fillin’ yez up on this,’ and he swung the bottle dangerously near Sammy’s head.

“ ‘Still smiling, Sammy shook his head; ‘No want him, those drink; him make for me pain of the head.’

“ ‘Hennessy scowled angrily. ‘Don’t want it, don’t yez? Well, ’tis time ye were learnin’ that whin yure boss gives ye an ordther ye are to move, and not sit squattin’ like a cross-legged toad, argifyin’. Git up, now, or I’ll kick a hole through the basement of yure pants!’ and he touched the lad none too gently with the toe of his boot.

“ ‘Sammy looked surprised, but still shook his head and smiled as he replied, ‘No want him, those drink; no geet up.’ Hennessy’s big foot swung back, then forward, as he landed a vicious kick squarely amidships; Sammy rolled over, without doubt the most surprised and the maddest Japanese in the Western Hemisphere. He sprang

to his feet, his eyes ablaze, but as Hennessy raised his foot for another kick, Sammy ducked under the tent flap and disappeared within.

“Hennessy howled derisively and stepped forward with the evident intention of following, but just then his head rocked backward from an awful smash dealt him by the youngster, who stepped out of the tent and faced the furious Irishman. It was the hilt of that old cavalry sabre which had halted Mr. Hennessy’s advance. Full and square in his teeth the blow had landed, and as he spat the blood and a couple of floating teeth from between his lacerated lips, he yelled, ‘Ye son of a scutt! ye wud play wid the tools, wud yez?’ He sprang into the open door of his own quarters, snatched up his sabre, and, leaping out, sent the scabbard clattering to the earth as he strode toward the waiting Jap, who seemed to have forgotten his anger and was now smiling expectantly.

“The blow had instantly sobered the big trooper, but it had also wakened the devil in him, and it was evident to the men who ran flocking to the scene that Hennessy meant to hurt the boy, possibly to kill him.

“ ‘Now, ye haythen toad, I’ll show yez how to use the business end av a cheese knife! I’ll just slice off wan ear as a sooveneer an’ then I’ll spank yez with the flat av me blade; but if ye are nasty

about it, by God, I'll take the two av thim,' and with this he made a vicious cut at Sammy's head, the blow slipping harmlessly from the waiting steel.

"Two of the men started to rush Hennessy from the rear to prevent a killing, but Reynolds interfered, saying 'Let him alone; this isn't your fight.'

"'But Hennessy is crazy drunk and will kill him.'

"'I don't think so,' calmly replied Reynolds. 'Hennessy will presently see a great light, and, if I mistake not, will be a very sober man when he finishes his job.'

"And it was so. For the first few moments Sammy seemed content to parry the strokes which were rained upon him with all the strength and fury of the enraged Irishman. So furiously did Hennessy press home his attack, and so steadfastly did the little Jap hold his ground, that again and again the blades were engaged up to the very hilt, and it seemed that Sammy's unguarded sword hand must surely suffer; but each time a deft turn of the wrist put aside the danger. The boy's enigmatical smile, and the ease with which he parried each savage cut and thrust, seemed to drive the big trooper wild, for with a fierce oath he redoubled his effort and sought by

sheer weight to break down his adversary's guard. With this onslaught Sammy's tactics changed, and within ten seconds the spellbound men realized, as did Hennessy, that with all his bulk and strength the big fellow was but as a child, absolutely at the mercy of that smiling, youthful foe, while the sword play which followed was the talk of many a camp fire in the years that followed.

"Stepping back a pace, the Japanese suddenly set his sabre whirling in a peculiar wheel-like movement, which opposed a circular shield of steel to Hennessy's weapon. Swifter and swifter whirled that shining thing, its sibilant hiss growing more and more venomous, menacing and deadly. Utterly confounded, Hennessy paused, his sword arm extended, too dumfounded to give ground or to drop his point. Suddenly the guardless sabre shot out, and, engaging the Irishman's blade, tore it from his hand and sent it flying over the heads of the crowd, to fall harmlessly fifty feet away. Then, as his arms dropped limply, the gray of a great fear stole over Hennessy's face; not the fear of a coward, but the fear of a brave man who looks into the eyes of a death he cannot parry, while that silent serpent of steel darted through his hair, between ear and skull, first on one side, then the other; passed like lightning within a hair's breadth of his jugular, then under

each armpit, or flicked a button from the bosom of his shirt, as if seeking the most deadly spot to place its fatal sting. Yet no harm came to the Irishman; not one drop of blood did he lose. In a fraction of a minute it was ended, as Sammy swung his sabre upward and brought it down flat-side, landing with a sounding whack just above Hennessy's left ear, knocking all the sense out of him for a few minutes. Turning to Reynolds, the boy laughingly said, 'Me no hurt him; him no Samurai; him big boy, not know how for make those fight.' Then he sat down before his tent and resumed the repairs on his buckle.

"That settled it. Sammy had made good as a fighting man, and from that day he was the idol of the company. Hennessy was thoroughly whipped, and, like a real man, he knew it and bore no malice. After an hour he emerged from his quarters, and walking up to the Jap, grasped his hand and said, 'Sammy, yure the boss of this camp; God knows ye should av kilt me for the dhirty cur that I was, but ye didn't, and I'm yure frind. If yez want a striker to clane yure horse, or to be doin' yure dhirty wurruk, it's meself that's lookin' for the job, for ye are the biggest man I iver hooked up wid, if ye are put up in a small bundle.'

“Sammy’s smile broadened, as he warmly shook the Irishman’s hand.

“ ‘Hennessy one fine boy, when he no make of those drink; it is good for be friends.’

“Hennessy spent ten days in the guardhouse for his drunken folly, and it was Sammy who regularly carried to him tidbits from his own mess.

“We had enjoyed a season of comparative quiet, but the long expected break came early in July. The entire Apache nation, which had for months been seething with unrest, now broke into open revolt with the usual campaign of murder and pillage.

“At dusk one evening a courier, who had ridden seventy miles since noon, brought orders from the Colonel to intercept a war party of seventy or eighty Tontos, who were reported raiding up the San Simeon valley, bound for Sonora. Company F, at Fort Bowie, would cut them off from the outlet at the upper end of the Valley, when it was supposed the Reds would swing to the westward and, skirting the hills, would cross the divide at or near Dragoon Summit and make for the Mexican border through the foothills to the west of Dos Cabezas. By hard riding it might be possible to intercept them at Hanging Rock Springs, a favorite camping place for such expeditions.

Hurried preparations were made, and at three o'clock next morning Troop C filed out from cantonments on its long ride. As men and horses were fresh, we rapidly put mile after mile behind us in the cool morning hours. A hurried breakfast as the sun came up from behind the distant Dragoons, and then began the dreary ride across the desolate stretch of hill and plain which lay between us and Hanging Rock, the point at which I hoped to bag our game. Mile after mile we jogged under the blazing Arizona sun, the rear of the little column hidden in the blinding alkali dust, which rose in clouds from the dry, parched earth. Far to the front, with the flankers, rode Reynolds, and with him Sammy, who had entered upon this man-hunt with all the enthusiasm of a boy.

“At noon we halted for an hour, to rest the horses and eat our slender ration; then on we pushed across the barren wastes toward our destination. At mid-afternoon the heat became terrific, the horses suffering severely and many of them beginning to show evidences of the twelve hour stretch. Hanging Rock, fifteen miles away, was now in plain view across the Valley, but it began to be questionable whether the command could reach it before dusk, and it would be most

imprudent to scale the hill and enter that rocky den after the sun had gone down.

“Nature, in a freakish mood, had pushed the long shelf of rock out from the summit of the divide, and most strange it was that there, high up above the plain, should bubble forth from beneath the hanging scarp of stone, a great spring of clear, cool water.’ The ridge was a wilderness of giant boulders, a jungle of ragged rocks, thick strewn, as if scattered by some Titan hand in the far-off days when earth was young.

“Suddenly the left flankers, a half mile in advance, drew up, and Reynolds’ signal told me that something unusual was beyond. A moment later we saw a single horseman emerge from one of the numerous blind canyons on the left and ride rapidly toward the waiting soldiers. Reaching them he seemed to confer for a moment, then Reynolds wheeled and dashed back toward the column, waving his hat and shouting some unintelligible message. As I rode forward to meet the flying horseman, his white face warned me of evil tidings.

“ ‘Captain, a scout from Fort Grant says that the Colonel’s wife and his two little children, with a detail of six men, left Grant at noon, to meet the Colonel at Huachuca; two hours after they left the post, news of the break reached the camp,

and Captain Dunlap sent this scout after the Colonel's wife to bring her back. He ran into a band of Apaches who were following the trail of the ambulance, and he thinks they will overtake it at Hanging Rock. Unable to warn the detail, and with another band of Indians between him and Grant, he cut around and was making for Huachuca when he spied us.'

"God! It was fifteen miles to Hanging Rock, and even now the little detail might be surrounded. And a woman, too! It meant swift action, so turning to the command, I told the men the situation, explaining that the lives of our Colonel's wife and children, and of the six troopers, depended upon our reaching Hanging Rock before the Reds could complete their devilish work. As many of the horses were exhausted, it would depend upon those who had the best mounts to make the rescue, so I ordered each man to do his best and started the entire troop upon a free-for-all run for the Rock. Within ten minutes Company C was strung out for a mile across the desert, the better horses forging to the front, the weaker falling to the rear. Fortunately, my horse was in fair condition and carried me well to the front. I rode hard, but far in advance of all, raced Reynolds' big bay and Sammy's pinto. An hour, which seemed an eternity, had passed, when

less than a score of troopers reached the foot of the ridge a mile from the spring. As one after another of the horses dropped back exhausted, I wondered how many would be with me at the finish, and if we should be in time.

Suddenly from the heights above came the far-away bang of a Springfield, then another, while the faint puff of rifle smoke floating from the summit told us that the Tontos were at work. Up the slope we went as rapidly as the reeking horses would carry us; far to the front, now disappearing behind the rocks, rode Reynolds and Sammy. The reports of the Springfields came ever clearer to us as we toiled up the rocky slope, and now and again we heard the exultant yells of the savages, as they pressed their attack. A quarter of a mile from the spring my horse wavered, then stumbled and fell, unable to carry me another rod. Snatching my pistols from the holsters, I ran on, hoping against hope that we might be in time. A louder chorus of savage yells and a popping of the Colts told me that Reynolds and Sammy had reached the scene. Breathless with the uphill run, I finally turned a giant boulder, and the little amphitheatre about the spring was spread out before me. A few yards to the rear of the water hole stood an ambulance, the mules all down; just behind the spring, and cowering against the

overhanging rock, was the Colonel's wife, with her helpless little ones, while lying about were five motionless figures in faded army blue, which told the story of brave men who had battled to the last and had died the soldier's death. Beside the praying woman knelt a wounded trooper, calmly shooting into the horde of savage figures who were darting and dodging amidst the rocks, while to the left and in front stood Sammy and Reynolds, their Colts spitting viciously at the Indians, who were evidently surprised and disturbed by the unwelcome reinforcements. The men were directly between the Indians and the woman, and as the savages hoped to capture the latter alive they were not using thier guns, but had attacked the Jap and his comrade with knives and war clubs. Even as I looked the wounded man went down and, casting aside their empty weapons, Reynolds and Sammy drew their sabres and stood between the kneeling woman and the two score of yelping beasts. A moment later Reynolds toppled backward from a murderous thrust in the side and a blow from a war club upon the head, delivered simultaneously, and Sammy was alone, confronting that swarm of naked cut-throats. A half dozen of my men now came running up the trail, and in an instant their Springfields were roaring as they pressed forward,

shooting, and shouting encouragement to the boy. Then, clear and vibrant, above the din of the yelling savages, above the shouts of the men and the banging of the Springfields, rose in a foreign tongue a strange, weird chant, full and sonorous as a trumpet call. It was the battle song of the Samurai; Sammy's answering challenge; the war cry of his fathers. About him shimmered and hissed that impenetrable circle of steel, and though they hacked and stabbed in frantic haste not once did a hostile thrust reach beyond that matchless guard. Like a thing of light, the shining weapon darted here and there, claiming with each touch its tithe of blood.

"The leader of the Redskins, a hideously painted buck, seeing the rescuers near at hand, made a sudden feint and, dropping upon one knee, attempted to stab the boy through the abdomen. It was his last stroke, for as Sammy sprang back his blade whirled downward, the savage hand dropped to the earth, lopped clean at the wrist, as with an axe, and the next instant a life went out through an ugly gash in the dusky throat. Louder rose that rhythmic chant, while ever, as some thin flame, the slender blade played swiftly about the swordsman.

"Reynolds struggled to rise, but was too badly hurt, and sank back beside the prostrate trooper.

Never pausing in his song, Sammy stepped in front of his fallen friend, and as the steel told on its fateful tale, high up above the din of strife his words rang out: 'Heed me, oh mighty ones, my fathers of the past! The spirit lives within thy son! See! the arm is strong, the hand is sure, and with each stroke the life wine flows! To the sacred annals of our house I add another deed. Hail to ye, oh mighty dead! Hail! heroes of Yamato's line!'

"Swiftly and more deadly flamed that gleaming brand, as Sammy, seemingly endowed with more than human strength, now took the offensive and, pressing into the struggling band, made a sudden, swinging side cut which swept a head completely from its moorings, then plunged a foot of steel into another naked breast.

"It was more than the Tontos could stand, and they gave way before the Jap's sudden onslaught, taking refuge behind the rocks. A dozen troopers were now in action, their fire soon causing the Indians to scatter like quail along the rocky ridge, where it would have been foolhardy to pursue.

"As the Indians fled Sammy dropped his dripping point, and turning, ran back to Reynolds, and was in the act of lifting him when an Indian, who had paused in his flight, rested his rifle bar-

rel upon a boulder, and, taking deliberate aim, shot the boy through the body. The little fellow pitched forward and lay so motionless we thought him dead; but as the boys tenderly lifted and turned him he smiled faintly, as he said, 'Me all right; help Meester Reynolds.' Then the mercy of unconsciousness came to him, and he lay white and still as one whose earthly cares were at an end.

"It was the wickedest little fight I've ever seen; five troopers were dead and three were desperately wounded, while there were eighteen good Indians to balance the account, seven of them Sammy's. The woman and her babies were safe, so the sacrifice had not been wholly in vain.

The surgeon shortly reached the scene and hurriedly examined the wounded men. To my look of inquiry he replied, 'Reynolds and the other man will pull through, but Sammy is booked; spine broken.' From the troopers gathered close about came a half-suppressed sob, which told, more eloquently than words, how the lad had won them.

"Throwing out a strong picket, I made quick preparations for the night. Within an hour the remainder of the command had straggled in, the Colonel's wife and children were housed in the ambulance, supper was cooked, then the stillness

and the grandeur of an Arizona night was upon that blood-stained bivouac.

“Reynolds, his head bandaged and the long cut in his side dressed and stitched, slept fitfully, muttering incoherently of unknown people and places. For Sammy, nothing could be done; his hurt was mortal, and within a few hours the great Silence, the Nirvana of his faith, would be his. Presently the moon came swinging up into the cloudless, starlit sky, driving back the shadows, toning the rough outlines of the rocks and making beautiful the rugged amphitheatre about the spring. By ten o’clock it was as light as at early dawn, while the surgeon and I sat beside the boy as he lay upon the rough blanket bed.

“ ‘Sammy, I said, as I took his hand, ‘you are badly wounded and it may be that you will not again return to your people. Will you tell me of your home, and will you give me some message for those who are dear to you?’

“ ‘There was wondrous strength in the grip he gave my hand, and his voice was steady as, in halting, uncertain English he told me of his birth-place in faraway Japan, his beautiful Japan that he would never see again; of his father, the ‘grand man’ who had sent him out into the world that he might learn the ways of the ‘Merican Soldier,’ and thus be of greater service to his country in

some day of need. He told us of the great palace upon a hill, which had been his home, and spoke reverently of the little mother who waited for his return. He was most anxious that his father should know he had fallen in battle, and that many men had felt his steel before he went down. 'Me Samurai,' he added, simply; 'it is good that Samurai should die in those fight.'

"Reynolds, unconscious and feverishly moaning, lay a few feet distant, and Sammy asked that he be moved so that he might lie beside his friend. Just beside his bed the moonlight showed a tiny desert flower, a flower not born to blush unseen, but destined, thank God, to brighten the dying hour of that home-hungry little Japanese. He plucked the flower, and taking it to his lips, he said, 'Many flowers in my countree.' After this he lay very still, gazing steadily up into the limitless, jeweled space, as if trying to fathom the eternal mystery of life and death. It was nearly midnight when I noticed that his hands were growing cold, and found that the death dew was gathering upon his brow. The surgeon, after feeling the pulse, beckoned me aside to whisper that the hour was come. As we bent over him, his eyes sought mine and he said, haltingly, 'Capitaine and that doctor man are been verre good to Sammy.' Turning his head, he noticed that the

blanket had fallen away from his comrade's shoulder; with great effort he reached out, and pulling the blanket in place, patted the shoulder lovingly, and laid the desert flower upon Reynolds' breast. 'Him my friend,' he whispered; 'him Samurai, too; him 'Merican Samurai.' For a few minutes his pulse fluttered intermittently, when I saw that his lips were moving, and bending low, I caught the faintly murmured words, 'Nippon! Nippon! Samurai!' Then the brave heart was stilled forever, and we knew that a gallant soul had passed.

"So died a Samurai; giving his young life in defense of the helpless ones of an alien people, a people who regarded him and his kind as pagans. Surely, in the final muster, the Great Commander, making no distinction as to race or creed, will reward soldiers such as he.

"It was a sad returning to the home camp. Reynolds, raving in delirium, was conveyed slowly in the ambulance, and it was not until after poor Sammy had been buried that he regained consciousness. A fortnight later he emerged from the hospital, gaunt and haggard, with deep lines on his brow from this last sorrow, for he loved his little comrade with all the strength of his great nature.

"The men came in a body to request that Sammy should be given a soldier's funeral. The Colonel, who had arrived, and had heard how the

boy died, cried like a child as he told the men they should have their wish.

“At sunset we laid him to rest, with full military honors. The salute was fired, then, with tears coursing down his bronzed cheek, the bugler stepped to the head of that lowly grave and sounded taps—the soldier’s ‘good night.’ Sweetly and sadly those mournful cadences floated out over the desert, Troop C’s farewell to little Sammy.

“Two days later a message came from Department Headquarters inquiring if one Izo Yamato, a Japanese, was at Huachuca, and if so to extend to him every courtesy, etc., etc., by order of the War Department. I replied, briefly detailing the history of his death. I also wrote the Japanese Consul at San Francisco, telling him all.

“A month slipped by, when an ambulance and escort arrived from Benson. Sammy’s father, Count Yamato, a distinguished man of middle age, had come to take the body home. Through an interpreter and Reynolds he heard the story of Sammy’s gallant fight and death. He was much moved and, though his eyes were dim with unshed tears, he gravely saluted the Colonel and myself, as he declared himself content, since his son had died as befitted a Samurai of his rank.

“Through the interpreter, we told him of the

great friendship between his son and Reynolds. It was after a long talk with the Count next day that Reynolds sought the Colonel with a strange request. He explained that, as his three years of service would expire within a month, he desired the Colonel's influence with the Department in securing his immediate discharge. The Count had offered formally to adopt him as his son and, having no ties which bound him to his native land, he accepted. It was easily arranged, and two days later they started west with Sammy's remains. Within a week I, too, was in San Francisco, ordered to duty at the Presidio. As I crossed the ferry from Oakland, we ran close under the stern of a great Pacific liner bound for the Orient. On the afterdeck stood a tall figure, and Sergeant Reynolds' voice came to me across the waters, 'Good-bye and God bless you, Captain.' The Count stood beside him, and I knew that below decks little Sammy's body was going home to sleep beside his fathers. Into the splendor of the sunset which lay beyond the Golden Gate, to the far off land of flowers, sailed the mighty ship bearing my two Samurai, the living and the dead."

The Colonel paused in his story, and taking from his pocket a letter postmarked Tokio, Japan, May 1, 1904, he read the following extract:

“As a military man you are, of course, interested in the war. Here in Japan we hear little of events at the front save the official dispatches, with which you are already familiar. Yesterday, however, I witnessed an event of more than passing interest. During the recent desperate fighting between the Japanese torpedo flotilla and the Russian battleships about Port Arthur, a Lieutenant Commander of the Japanese navy, in command of a destroyer, made a daring and successful attack upon one of the enemy’s vessels. He was killed in the action, and his body brought home for interment. Never have I seen so splendid a spectacle nor so impressive a service. In attendance were the Emperor and the entire Imperial Court, as well as the highest officers of the Army and Navy, all ablaze with gold lace and jeweled decorations. The body rested upon a magnificent catafalque of purple velvet, bearing the national arms and draped with the battle flags of his ship. It seems that the officer had been a Samurai, a member of some noble family, and, in recognition of his gallantry in action, a part of the ceremony was the conferring by the Emperor on the dead man of the Order of the Golden Kite, thus marking him as one of Japan’s national heroes. After this ceremony was ended, an old, white-haired noble, said to be the dead man’s

father, took from an attendant a package, which proved to be a silken American flag, with which he reverently covered the casket. Then the crowd slowly filed out, leaving the dead hero alone under the folds of Old Glory. It is said to have been an event unprecedented in the history of Japan, but I could learn little concerning it. Those I asked either didn't know, or wouldn't tell. Strange people, these Japanese."

As he rose to bid us good-night, the Colonel concluded: "I am wondering if the daring commander who gave his life to Japan, and whose body lay in the old temple, shrouded in the American colors, was not Sergeant Reynolds of old Troop C, one of my Two Samurai."

THE SILENT FRIEND.

This is a story of a mine, a man and some other things.

Buck Henderson, cowpuncher, a graduate of the range, had been knocking about the country during a period covering half of his thirty-five years, but for the past five years had spent his winters pegging away at his mining claim; "The Silent Friend," he called it.

Men laughed at him and called him loco for wasting his time and substance on the supposedly barren ledge, whose outcrop could be seen high above timber line on the beetling crest of Bald Mountain, which overlooked the town.

But Buck had faith in his Silent Friend and hammered away. His camp and the mouth of his tunnel were securely tucked away under an overhanging shelf of the reef, so he didn't in the least mind a little thing like a snowslide. For months on end he would be completely shut in by the great drifts, and from his aerie looked out on the white land below and watched the Rio Grande snow-plows patiently bucking their way to the hungry smelters of the town, which were ever crying for

more coal and more pay rock. All day he worked in his tunnel, boring deeper into the heart of the mountain, and at night he read by his argand lamp of men who had dared and done things in the big world out yonder. It was the clean, wholesome, care-free life of a busy man in the silent places of the hills. He had work to do and he did it, with never a backward look. Occasionally the solitude became a trifle oppressive, when he would gratify his yearning for speech by delivering a learned dissertation to Major, the big mastiff who was his sole companion. At such times he would tramp back and forth within the narrow limits of the cabin, while he outlined to Maje the great things they would do when the "Silent Friend" gave up its treasure; how he meant to build a smelter down there by the river, where he could treat his own ore, and at the same time give the other miners a show, by bucking those other two smelters which belonged to the Combine—the robbers. And when he had got a good big wad of money laid by, he was going to build himself a home down yonder on that plateau just above the town, and he would blast out a nice easy driveway to it. The house wasn't going to be any cheap affair. Not much! It should be something big and bang up, with turrets and towers like an old castle.

After he had blown off steam and talked himself into shape again, he would inquire solicitously what the Major thought of the scheme. Then Maje would gravely offer his paw, and they would solemnly shake on the proposition.

Thus the winter would pass, and when the white barriers were gone and the grass showed green along the valleys, Buck would lock the cabin, leaving Major in the care of a family in the town, and would ride away on the cow hunt to earn the grubstake for another winter with the "Silent Friend."

In the spring of 1887—it was late in April—he put the last shot into the breast of his tunnel, and turning his back upon the hills went down into the town to arrange for his summer's work in the cow country.

The rains had been unusually heavy and the melting snow made every mountain rivulet a roaring torrent. The river was bank full and Indian creek, a lesser stream which came in just below the town, now swollen to fifty times its normal size, was a raging flood which threatened serious damage. The greater portion of the town lay in the angle between the two streams. The Acme smelter was located on the creek, a few hundred yards above its confluence with the main river, and it was its platforms and bins, which extended

out into the stream upon huge bulkheads, which constituted the chief source of danger to the town, as they obstructed a portion of the channel, and in time of freshets caused the flood water to back up into that portion of the town known as "The Bowery," a section given over to dance halls, gambling saloons and other low resorts.

Buck reached town near midday and was leisurely finishing his meal at a restaurant, when cries of alarm from the street caused him to hurriedly leave the place and join the throng which had gathered on the hill overlooking The Bowery. A freight engine, which had cut loose from its train, came racing down the line at express speed to give the warning. There had been a cloudburst at the headwaters in the hills, and Indian creek was coming down, a solid wall of water, sweeping all before it. The residents of the Bowery must vacate instantly! Quick! The flood would be on them in a few minutes.

But it was no easy matter to rout out people who gambled or danced all night and slept all day, so the Bowery, unable to realize its peril, was slow to move. Men were now running through the streets, shouting warning; and soon a motley procession of Boweryites were trailing toward the higher ground, carrying hastily gathered packs of their belongings.

Buck had just reached the scene, when the marshal touched his arm. "You're just the man I want, Buck. Come help me get those women out of there." But Buck's practical eye had located a yet graver danger. He pointed to the smelter's ore platform. "Billy," he said, "that thing blocks half the channel, and if it stands, it will raise the floodhead twenty feet in twenty seconds when the big water reaches that narrow place at the bulkheads, and it will sweep half the town."

"But it's built for keeps; how are you going to get it down?" anxiously queried the marshal.

"Blow it down; its main strength is in those big stringers, and I'm going to bust them," replied Buck, as he sprang into a grocer's cart and bade the boy drive to a supply store three blocks down street. "What will old Kingsley say?" called out the marshal.

"Old Kingsley be damned; you get the women out; I'll fix the bulkheads." And Buck lashed the horse into a dead run. Within five minutes the grocer's wagon came tearing back and drove pell-mell out on the bulkhead, which, fortunately, was nearly free from ore. Buck hastily unloaded four nail kegs, in each of which he had two dozen two-pound sticks of "XXX" dynamite; then he grabbed the coil of fuse from the seat and sent the boy and wagon spinning back up the hill.

Rapidly cutting four lengths of fuse, he began carefully adjusting the primers which he fished out of his pocket. A minute or two sufficed to push his pencil down into four of the pasty sticks, making in each a hole large enough to receive the end of his fuses, now capped and ready to release the slumbering thunderbolt imprisoned in fifty pounds of high explosive, which each keg contained. He was soon ready for the blast, by which he hoped to so weaken the big stringers which supported the structure, that the first onrush of the flood would carry the entire bulkhead away. The timbers he meant to destroy were nearly four feet beneath the surface of the water, which had backed from the swollen stream and now swirled in a great lazy eddy against the structure.

The explosion of so great a quantity of dynamite would shake the earth for a mile about, and boards and timbers might fly in all directions; so, as he adjusted the ropes by which he would lower each keg to its position beneath the water, he shouted a quick warning to the crowd and waved them back. But no one seemed to understand his signal, so intent were all in watching the skurrying exodus from the Bowery. Again he waved his warning and carried one keg down near the end of the platform, where he lowered it over the side and down into the water, carefully plac-

ing a piece of ore on the end of the fuse, which reached to the floor where he stood. He was returning for another keg, when a dapper young man, in natty gray clothes and gloves, ran down the hill and out on the platform to meet him.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded sharply of Buck.

"I'm going to have some fireworks and, incidentally, try to blow out this bulkhead. You want to chase yourself up that hill again and get out of my way," answered the miner.

"You shan't blow up the bulkhead. My father is the principal owner of these works, and I order you to get off this property."

"Who's your father?" asked the big fellow.

"Mr. Kingsley, the banker. He's the richest man in this town, and he will make it hot for you if you damage anything."

Buck's tone was impatient as he replied. "Look here, sonny, I haven't time to make a blue-print and specifications, but perhaps you will understand what I am doing this for when I tell you that this bulkhead blocks part of the outlet for that big lot of water which is coming down Indian creek. When it reaches here it will pile up and go over into the town, drowning a lot of people. Now, do you see?"

"You talk like a fool," retorted the younger

man, "the water can't go that high; and if it does, then the people will have to swim. Anyhow I order you off these premises."

Buck's reply was specific and pointed. The big hands gripped the youngster by the coat collar and that portion of a man's clothing commonly known as the "slack"; then striding to the edge of the platform, he held him above the muddy eddy of the backwater and shook him as one might shake an empty bag. "You d——d young squirt," he said, "you haven't sense enough to see that the wrecking of this bulkhead will save your daddy's smelter, too. Want to let 'em swim, eh? Well, you'll have time to swim for just about half a minute and then get over that hill and out of range before two hundred pounds of dynamite lets go."

With this admonition, Kingsley, Jr., was chucked head first into the pool. The warning struck home, however; for, after scrambling out, he lost no time in scudding for higher ground.

The dull roar of the oncoming freshet and the frantic cries of the crowd warned Buck that the flood had emerged from the mouth of the canyon, only a little more than a mile away, and within five minutes would be upon him. Quickly, but calmly, he lowered the charges of dynamite to their places, securing the end of each fuse to the

platform. This done, he lifted his head and sent that huge voice bellowing up the hill. "Dynamite!" he yelled. "Dynamite! Run for your lives!" Then, cutting a foot of fuse as a torch, he lighted it, and running to the outer end of the bulkhead, he touched the flame to the fuse of his first keg, serving each charge in like manner as he returned. Then, with long leaps, he went speeding through the ore yard and up the ridge, still shouting, "Dynamite! Run! Run!"

He had calculated his fuses to burn three minutes, and when people are properly scared, they can cover a considerable distance in that time, so the crowd led him by several lengths as he sprinted for safety.

The marshal had lost no time in hustling out the residents of the Bowery, but there were still several stragglers below the danger line when the crest of the flood came around the bend, only a few hundred yards distant, a leaping, roaring, foaming wall of yellow water, in which tossed tree trunks, fences, fragments of freight cars, bridge timbers and all the miscellaneous wreckage of an unhindered deluge.

Appalled, the crowd shrank further up the hillside, while the shrill cries of the escaping denizens of the Bowery rose high above the hoarse roar of the oncoming torrent. Like an angry

beast, it leaped the low barriers at the upper end of Bowery Lane, and in an instant was snarling and swirling through doors and windows and sapping at the foundations of the frail structures. First one, another, then a dozen buildings swayed totteringly and collapsed into a shapeless mass of torn and broken woodwork and masonry, each adding its quota of weight to the mighty battering ram which swept on toward the Acme bulkhead.

As Buck, at a safe distance up the hill, watched the demolition of the Bowery he realized how enormous was the volume of the floodwater, and prayed fervently that his shots might do their work; for, if they failed, he knew that six feet of water would be racing through the main street within the next two minutes. Others, too, had now seen the danger, and no man breathed as the crest of the water struck the bulkhead, recoiled, came on again, then paused in its mad rush, and while a portion darted through the narrowed channel, the greater volume swirled in to the bank toward the town and began backing up, mounting more than a foot a second toward the narrow cut through the hill, by which a street gained access to the ore yards. Up, up it climbed, till within five feet of the street opening, which would become a spillway for the easement of a million

tons of water yet to come. At this moment Buck's fireworks went off. There was a muffled roar, then a terrific, nerve-racking, ear-splitting explosion, which shot skyward great columns of water, together with fragments of splintered timber and sections of heavy planking. The big stringers were "busted," and the water did the rest, for the bulkhead, with a creaking groan of surrender, now gave way and was smashed to kindling wood by the ondriving flood.

With this obstruction removed, the water dropped at once, and the main portion of the town was no longer in danger. As the platform collapsed, a cheer went up, a cheer for Buck and his dynamite. It was evident to all that he had saved the town, as well as the Acme plant. Men were congratulating him upon his nerve and foresight, when a fresh cry of horror broke from the crowd.

One of the houses which had stood on the first terrace above the Bowery, and was seemingly safe, had succumbed to the gnawing of the waters about its foundations and now slipped down the bank and into the seething brown torrent. In an instant it was burst asunder and in the boiling flood were seen its occupants, a half dozen women of the town, who from the windows had been watching the scene of devastation below. Impotently the crowd looked on as these helpless bits

of human flotsam were hurried to their doom, here a bit of color in the dun mass of water, or there a white arm thrust upward in hopeless despair.

Buck and the marshal were first to awaken, and followed by a score of men, went tearing down the hillside, now slimy from its recent baptism, and on to the very brink of the roaring flood.

Joining hands to form a line, they waited for the first victim to sweep by, when the marshal plunged in, and holding by one hand to the man nearest behind, waded out in an effort at rescue. But the force of the water whirled him off his footing and sent him under, to be pulled out in a half strangled condition, while the drowning woman swept on to her death, the painted, sin-marked face with its wide staring eyes turned to her would-be rescuers in mute appeal.

Again the line was formed, and again its leader was submerged, unable to breast the stream, and another erring sister went by, to become a nameless and forgotten thing, buried under tons of sand in some eddy of the lower river.

Another, and yet another victim floated by the rescuers, and it seemed all must perish. Flinging himself backward into a sitting posture and extending one foot, Buck motioned to one of his fellows to remove the heavy boot. The man shook

his head in expostulation, but again the big voice made itself heard above the roar. "Pull it off, d——n you." The man obeyed; the other boot followed, and as Buck rose to his feet and flung off his coat, the last one of the unfortunate women floated by.

She seemed to be buoyed somewhat by her clothing, for she floated high, her long hair spread like a veil about the white, terror-stricken young face. Plunging in, Buck made a half dozen strokes with the current, which carried him to her side, where he was seen to put one hand beneath her head to keep it above water, while with his free arm he attempted to swim diagonally down stream to the bank. But a cross-current caught him and swept them further from the shore toward the tumbling maelstrom in mid channel, where they disappeared.

A groan went up from the watching hundreds and one of the little knot of rescuers exclaimed, "It's a dirty shame for a good fellow like Buck to waste his life trying to save one of them sports." Billy, the marshal, turned on him like a wildcat. "What difference does it make whether she's a sport or not," he roared, "she's a human bein,' ain't she? and a woman, ain't she? And furdernore, by God, he was a sure-enough man. There he is again! Hooray! He'll make it yet!

Don't give up, Buck, old boy, don't give up! You'll make it."

Screaming like a maniac, Billy sent his words unheard down stream, as if his mere voice would help the struggling, gasping man who was fighting grimly down there in that hell of water to save his own life and the life of a frail woman he had never seen before. Again and again the marshal shrieked his unheeded message, then sinking on his knees in the muck of the bank, this great strong man, who had faced death many times and in many ways, sobbed out an incoherent prayer to Him who rules the waters, that the life of his friend might be spared.

Buck was making his supreme effort now; he still had the girl and had again fought his way out of the heavier current and was desperately trying to reach the lighter water near the shore; but his strength was fast ebbing.

Just at the point where Indian creek emptied into the main river, a long spit of land reached out toward the channel, and it was toward this haven he now directed his waning energy. If he missed it and was carried out into the larger stream, nothing could save him nor his senseless charge.

He was horribly tired, and the inanimate weight on his left arm seemed to be dragging him down,

but with set teeth he grimly struggled on. God! how tired he was! His right arm seemed like lead and he swam haltingly, like an animal wounded to its death. For an instant he faltered in his stroke, and at once his head was below water. The life instinct is strong in every living thing, and the miner was no exception. As he caught his breath and drew the muddy water into his mouth, he instinctively withdrew his support from the girl, and using both hands, once more got his head well above water. He could save his own life, for he was in the eddy and the spit was only a few yards distant. He had tried hard to save the woman, but it was a toss-up between his life and hers, so she must now shift for herself. For one brief flash this thought possessed him; then, as if it were a thing ordained of the ages, he again slipped his arm beneath the sinking figure and made a half dozen desperate strokes for the shore. But he was utterly exhausted, and again he was going down and his mouth filled with water, as he gave the girl's body a last despairing push toward the land.

It was then his feet touched bottom and he staggered through the shoal eddy to the solid ground, dragging the girl by her hair, only to fall in a senseless and inanimate heap on the sand.

Very tenderly the two were carried up into

the town to the Rio Grande hospital. The girl was soon resuscitated, but Buck lay for hours in a stupor so profound the doctors were alarmed for his life. A quarter of a mile in flood water, battling for every breath, was too much for even his iron strength, and it was not until the following morning that he opened his eyes. Every muscle of his big body ached, and from head to foot he had bruises from contact with driftwood and other wreckage.

Beside his bed sat the marshal and the miner's first words were, "Billy, you ought to wash; you're a sight."

The marshal's voice was very gentle as he replied, "You never mind about me, Buck; I've been settin' here all night awaitin' for you to wake up, so I forgot to wash. How are ye feelin', old man?"

"As if I had been dangling at the end of a rotten rope over the ragged edge of a terrible uncertainty," answered the big fellow, as he painfully twisted himself into an easier position. "How many of those women were saved?"

"The little girl you brought ashore was the only one; the rest of them all went down the river and have not been found. Buck, that was the gamest thing I ever see did, and this morning you are the biggest man this side of old Grant.

Everybody is talking about brave Buck Henderson, and there's a feller here from the Denver News wants to photograph you for next Sunday's paper."

"Oh, hell," grunted Mr. Henderson disgustedly, "I'm no patent medicine advertisement; tell him I won't have it."

"I told him that last night; I told him you wouldn't stand for no snap-shootin' business, and if you caught him workin' his picture box on the sly you would just about slit his neck and run his leg through it. But all the same, old man, you did a big thing yesterday, and I'm right here to tell you that the government ought to print your tintype on hundred dollar bills for doin' it."

"Oh, let up! Tell me about the girl. Is she all right? Who is she and what is she like?" asked the miner.

"Well, sir, her name is Katherine Wolfe, and she's about the nicest little trick you ever see. She's pretty and she's nice, and quiet and refined. She's educated, too, and talks like the Ladies' Home Journal. Only been here a week, and if I didn't know that she'd been hangin' out at Belle Boone's joint, I'd swear she was some feller's sister back in the states, and was straight goods."

"She may be some one's sister, Bill, even if she isn't 'straight goods,' and if she is all that

you say, gentle, refined and educated, she ought not to be on the Bowery," gravely observed Buck.

"That's right," answered the marshal. "I've been sayin' the same thing, and I think we ought to have the boys chip in and make up a pool to send her home, back to her folks, and let her start over again."

Buck's big hand was extended. "You have a big heart, Billy."

"Just you wait till you see her, and then you'll say I'm right."

"I'm not going to see her, but your scheme is all right and you may count me in on the pool."

"Not see her! Well, you'll have one hell of a time gettin' out of it. She's been to the door three times this morning to ask about you, and she wants to see you. Sabe?"

The big fellow frowned as he replied, "Oh, yes, I know, I know; she wants to fall on her knees and slop over with a lot of rot about what a devil of a fellow I am just because I pulled her out of the water. Not any of that in mine. I pass. Tell her I'm in delicate health and can't stand thank-offering ceremonials. Tell her I'm very sick, dying, dead. Tell her anything you like, but keep her muzzled till I get away. Now, give me some coffee and my clothes. Did anybody have sense enough to take care of those

boots I left on the bank? Then I must rustle a horse and start for camp. I'm due at Snowden's lower ranch tomorrow, or I'll be late for the first roundup."

"Is there anything else your royal highness would like?" queried the marshal, as he deliberately rolled a cigarette between some very mud-stained fingers. "Anything in the way of a private car and special train to take you after them old cows? Or mebbe you'd like a bottle of wealthy water and some mince pie to sorter stay your stummick while I'm fryin' your coffee. Say, you turn your ear trumpet this way while I talk some. First, the doctor says you are to stay in bed for a day or two, and that's where you stay, if I have to hog-tie you to fill the prescription. Furdernore, likewise and lastly, I ain't agoin' to tell that little girl any such durn truck as you've been throwing at me. Tell her yourself. I'll send you some coffee and then I'm going to fall into a bathtub and amuse myself making mud pies for a while. So long."

Next day, though still sore from his battle with the freshet, Buck was almost as good as new and was anxious to be away. The doctor vetoed this move, however, but allowed him to dress and move about the room. Toward evening he walked down the hall and out upon the balcony overlooking

the town, where he was gazing abstractedly at the creek, which had now subsided to its usual insignificant proportions, when someone touched his arm. He turned to look down into the face of a young woman in the gray and white garb of a nurse.

Exquisitely moulded, with the petite figure which big men most admire, she presented a charming picture. Masses of gold brown hair framed the oval face, with its clear-cut, almost classic features, and the great brown eyes, luminous and fathomless, were looking at him steadily, and unafraid.

"I am Katherine Wolfe," she said simply, "and I came to thank you." That was all. No fuss, no tears, none of the *fol de rol* which he had dreaded. Just those few words of thanks, though in the wonderful eyes he read a depth of gratitude which might not be voiced.

Mr. Henderson was wholly disconcerted. "Why, yes, of course, won't you sit down?" he replied, pointing to a settee on the veranda; "you see I took you for one of the nurses, and you rather surprised me."

"I am to be a nurse," she answered; "at least I am to try to be one. I had a talk with the doctor this morning and he has agreed to let me learn

the work and put me at once into uniform. Are you quite recovered, Mr. Henderson?"

Buck blushed like a schoolgirl as he awkwardly hastened to declare himself fit. "You certainly look all right," he added. "No one would ever suspect that you had ridden a quarter of a mile on a washout within the past forty-eight hours. Didn't even muss your hair, did it?"

A sudden pallor came to the oval cheek and the fine eyes dilated with the horror of recent memory, as she gravely replied, "I was uninjured, thanks to the man who rode with me, but I was frightened, oh, so frightened. To my last hour I believe I shall never cease to hear the awful rush and roar of the water, and I think constantly of those women whom I saw drown. That's why I wanted to thank you."

"Um, er, were they friends of yours?" he inquired, looking at her curiously.

Steadily the look was returned. "Friends of mine?" No! I scarcely knew their names." Her voice was a bit unsteady and a faint flush stole over her face, as she continued. "They were not my friends, but I saw them struggling and gasping in the water beside me; saw the awful fear in their eyes as they were hurried down to their death, and I can't forget it."

Rising, she extended her hand. "I hear you

are to leave the hospital in the morning, Mr. Henderson; will you understand all that I feel but have left unsaid?"

Buck's big paw closed over the little hand. "Miss Wolfe," he said, "there was some talk of your going away, going to your home; are you sure you want to remain here?"

The beautiful eyes were misty with unshed tears and her lips quivered with suppressed emotion, as she shook her head. "I have no home, no place to go; the asylum offered me here by the doctor was the greatest godsend I could have hoped for. Good-bye." And she was gone.

For a long time Buck stood staring stupidly at the door through which she had disappeared; then, turning about, he stared for another space down at the mud flat which had been the Bowery. "And that girl was at Belle Boone's; well, I'm d——d," was his final comment.

The long summer wore slowly away, and Buck's duties on the range prevented his visiting the town till late in the autumn, during which time he heard nothing of Katherine Wolfe. But his thoughts were busy, and many nights, after his fellows had bedded down, he sat by the waning camp fire and from the dying embers wrought the picture of the oval-faced girl with the gold-brown hair, upon whose life he held a claim of salvage.

He remembered with what calm dignity she had tendered her thanks, how high-bred and ladylike she had appeared, with nothing of the Bowery air in her makeup; yet, she had been an inmate of Belle Boone's notorious resort! Some mystery surrounded her, of that he felt assured. It was a problem in integral calculus far beyond his ken, and though the solution was many times attempted, it was as many times dismissed, each failure fixing more strongly his purpose to see her again and learn from her own lips her history.

When the fall beef hunt was ended, Buck rode away to the mountains for another winter at the mine. At the town he had a long talk with his friend, the marshal, from whom he gleaned but meager information. Katherine Wolfe had remained at the hospital all summer; was never seen on the streets and was spoken of in highest terms by the surgeon in charge, as well as the nurses. She had shown great aptitude in learning the profession and had only a few days since accepted a position in a Denver hospital. That was all.

That night Buck took the train for Denver. With his usual singleness of purpose, he had set out to unravel the skein, and unravel it he would, provided the girl with the gold-brown hair would speak. Two days later he was back in the town and buying his supplies; then he and Maje again

took up their winter quarters at the "Silent Friend."

Twice during the winter Buck came down from the hills and rode away on the little narrow-gauge railway for Denver, each time returning to work harder and think deeper than before. Maje was the only one in whom he confided, and Maje was a very close-mouthed person in such matters.

Deeper into the granite breast of the mountain he drove his tunnel, and still men laughed as the dull boom of Buck's blasts was carried to the town below. Late in March the rock formation through which he was working suddenly changed in character and the "indications" which he had so long hoped for were more and more pronounced with each day's progress. Furiously the big fellow toiled, sleeping little, eating little, but doing two men's work. As he left the cabin on the morning of April first, he took with him into the tunnel a double charge of powder. By two o'clock he had drilled two extra deep holes, in which he carefully tamped four big sticks of high explosive; then, lighting his fuses, he hurried out to escape the mighty blast which came a few moments later. Eating his luncheon, he waited for an hour for the fumes to escape, then returned to the face of his drift. But his work was ended for that

day. Prying his way into the shattered rock, he sat down amidst the debris, picked up a few bits of reddish brown ore, which crumbled in his grasp, examined it carefully by his lamp, then went back to the cabin.

From his soap-box cupboard he brought out a small brown jug, reserved for great occasions, poured out a stiff drink and thus addressed the big mastiff: "Maje, could I prevail upon you to join me in a libation to our 'Silent Friend'? Won't indulge, eh? Very well, I'll drink for both of us. Maje, that last big shot elevated us about a thousand degrees in the financial scale. Partner, we're rich! We're nabobs! and hereafter we can live on the fat. Here's how, you unappreciative old beggar."

Maje's big paw was gravely extended as Buck's drink disappeared, and he resumed: "Want to shake, eh? I'll just go you. I never felt more like shaking than I do this minute. I tell you, that last shot did the business; it blew into a chimney which is filled with decomposed iron ore that is simply lousy with free gold. FREE GOLD! do you sabe that? I don't know how big that chimney is, but she is big enough to give us a ripping old stake, and if I don't miss my guess, the bottom of it will uncover the richest lead of high grade ore in this country, and that vein may

run down a mile. Think of it! A whole mile! Or maybe two miles! Let's take another drink."

Buck's dreams were very rosy that night, and they included another person, a certain—but we'll come to all that later on.

For three days he dug and delved into the soft deposit of the chimney, till he was convinced as to its large extent; after which he went down to the town and looked up a half dozen of the best mining experts of the place, showed them his samples and had them go with him to the "Silent Friend."

Then the news flew wide and fast. Buck Henderson had struck it rich! Uncovered a chimney worth millions! And everyone had laughed at him and his "Silent Friend!" The big, lucky devil!

That night he took the train for Denver. When Mr. Henderson returned a week later he was accompanied by two of the greatest mining experts in the west, and immediately it was rumored that he would install a fifty stamp mill and begin the scientific development of the greatest mine in the region. A thorough examination of the property by the experts enabled Buck to borrow fifty thousand dollars, which provided ample funds for the plant, and within ninety days the

thunder of his stamps was the dominant note in the busy camp.

The nature of his ore deposit made unnecessary a smelter for his own property, but he quietly gave it out that the promised smelter would come a little later, and that his first act would be to knife the Trust by reducing the cost of treatment at least twenty per cent.

The output of the "Silent Friend" astonished even the sanguine owner, and ere the year was ended Buck had paid off his indebtedness and, with a clear half million to his credit, was growing richer at the rate of five thousand dollars per day. He was the big man of the community, and men suddenly discovered that this quiet Titan was a financial genius and hastened to consult him upon all manner of enterprise. But Buck fought shy of schemes and gave his undivided time and effort to his mine.

The social leaders, who six months previous scarcely knew of his existence, now deluged him with invitations; but again he was shy and accepted few favors at the hands of his new-found friends.

Being a bachelor and newly rich, he was the target of every scheming mother who owned a daughter of marriageable age. Mrs. Kingsley, the acknowledged grande dame of the town, per-

emptorily cut off the half dozen aspirants for Miss Kingsley's hand and deliberately set about ensnaring this big, bashful young fellow, whose wealth would soon be counted by tens of millions. In this enterprise she was adroitly aided by her husband, the wily old banker, who never failed to invite Mr. Henderson into the president's private office at the bank, and talked vaguely of the golden possibilities of an enlarged bank, with a dozen branches in the surrounding towns, and hinted broadly that the shrewd owner of the "Silent Friend" was the very man to head such a venture, aided and assisted, of course, by the riper experience and astute judgment of an older man, himself, for example. Then he would slap the young fellow familiarly on the shoulder and declare that Mrs. Kingsley had insisted that Mr. Henderson should run up to the house that evening, quite informally, you know; just a quiet little family dinner party.

Buck would smile his inscrutable smile, and while he usually dodged the social function, did occasionally accept the banker's pressing invitation and spent a number of evenings at the Kingsley mansion, once going so far as to accompany the daughter to a musicale. Soon the gossips were busy, and it was currently reported that the miner had capitulated, horse, foot and dragoons,

to the Kingsley assault. Madame Kingsley was far too clever a general to wave her banners before the victory was assured, yet she simperingly admitted to her intimates that dear Mr. Henderson seemed greatly interested in her darling Lotta.

It was about this time that a Philadelphia architect appeared on the scene and began the construction of Castle Henderson, a superb structure on the bench above the town. Buck's dream was taking shape and the home he had promised himself soon began to rear its huge proportions upon the site he had long since chosen.

Steadily the "Silent Friend" increased its golden flow, till Buck could write his check in seven figures.

Again the sunlight fell warm on the land and the bunch grass was green in the cow country, when he announced that he was going east and would be absent for a month. The Castle was almost completed, and had been given over to the decorators and men who were filling the spacious apartments with rich tapestries and sumptuous furnishings.

It was currently understood that Miss Lotta Kingsley would presently become mistress of all this splendor. The Kingsleys and Mr. Henderson were the only persons who were fully conversant

with the true facts in the case, and they knew that no word had been spoken nor had the miner even hinted at such an arrangement. But, as the banker's daughter apparently had no rival in the field, Madame Kingsley, smiling in her superior manner, waited and hoped, saying nothing.

The night before his departure Buck gave a dinner to the leading financial men of the town, where he electrified them with an outline of his plans for increasing the prosperity of the camp, by inducing another railway to build across the mountains into their town. He stated that the success of the enterprise was already assured, and exhibited a telegram from the president of the road, stating that the preliminary survey would be begun at once. Then, in a ten minute speech, which bristled with facts and figures, he pointed out their duty and the steps which should be taken to further develop the great resources of their locality. He spoke briefly and concisely, each well-chosen sentence carrying a sufficient wealth of data to keep them thinking for weeks. When he had finished, every man about the table applauded wildly, then they looked at each other, wondering how and where this quiet-spoken, big-bodied young man had so quickly mastered the intricacies of high finance. They had heard him spoken of as a studious chap, a great reader and

all that sort of thing, but this was positive genius, etc., etc. Buck cut short their effusions. "Glad you like the plans," he said. "I'll be absent a month, and when I return most of the enterprises I have proposed should be well under way. My train leaves in thirty minutes, so I will ask you to excuse the host. Good night." And Mr. Henderson was off.

Two weeks later the foreman came down from the "Silent Friend" for an interview with the marshal, who was the only man in possession of Buck's address. The man was greatly excited, and in the privacy of the marshal's room confided the fact that during the previous night they had broken through into another chamber, larger than the original chimney, and so rich that the foreman hesitated to act further without his owner's orders. Would Bill please communicate with the boss? Bill would, and the following message flashed half across the continent:

"Mr. Buckingham Henderson,
Willard's, Washington.

Foreman reports striking new ore chamber so big and so rich he is scared. Wants orders. Answer. (Signed) BILLY."

Promptly came the reply:

"Tell him to dig. (Signed) BUCK."

Again wild rumors of the wonderful strike filtered out from the hills, bringing added hordes of fortune seekers to the busy camp,

A fortnight slipped past, when the marshal received a telegram announcing that Mr. and Mrs. Henderson would arrive on the evening train.

Buck was married! Married, and bringing his new wife home, without an inkling of his matrimonial intentions to even his closest friends! Wasn't that just like Buck, though, and wouldn't it put a million dollar crimp in old Mother Kingsley's schemes? Wow! Well, I guess!

These and kindred remarks were bandied about the streets all afternoon.

As the train pulled in that evening, half the town was gathered at the station to greet the big miner and, incidentally, to satisfy a great curiosity as to the manner of woman he had chosen as the mistress of Castle Henderson, which, fully completed, now blazed a welcome from its hundred windows.

As Buck appeared in the doorway of the coach, he lifted his hat and waved it happily in response to the cheer which went forth to greet his home-coming, then turning, assisted to the platform a dainty, gray-garbed figure, a girl with great shining eyes and masses of gold-brown hair.

As Billy, the marshal, was advancing with outstretched hand, his glance, turned with respectful interest upon the lady's face, then hung there in utter astonishment as the swift look of recogni-

tion came into his eyes. For an instant he hesitated, then smiling in gay welcome, he clasped the hand of his friend and turned with him to the waiting carriage, where he yielded to Buck's insistent invitation and was driven with them toward the great house upon the hill.

Half a hundred men had eagerly crowded forward to pay their respects to the miner, but he contented himself with a smiling wave of the hand and a cordial "See you later, boys," as the carriage drove away.

But the marshal was not the only one who recognized the new lady of Castle Henderson. A half dozen of the loiterers had remembered, and hesitated not to speak. Within ten minutes a hundred people knew, and before morning everyone in town knew that Mrs. Henderson was none other than the girl whose life Buck had saved at the time of the big flood.

Ah! how unctuously then did the small-souled and the envious scandalmongers roll this choice tidbit of information to and fro! "Wouldn't that jar you some?" queried the undercrust; "The monumental assurance of the man!" sneered the upper.

But it was a camp divided, for Buck's old friends, the men who had known him in the grub-stake days, now rallied loyally and declared that

it was Buck's affair solely. Buck was all wool, and if the lady he had married suited him, she also suited them! Anyhow, it was nobody's d—d business.

For a day or two Buck was constantly engaged at the mine; then he came down to see his friends. He seemed very happy as he smilingly acknowledged the congratulations, both as to his marriage and the big strike.

Having some business with Mr. Kingsley, he called at the bank, and for the first time was kept waiting before being ushered into the president's room.

As Buck entered the banker nodded coldly; then crisply inquired in what manner he could serve Mr. Henderson.

The miner's face flushed at the snub, but he quietly stated his business, which was soon disposed of, and was rising to take his leave, when the elder man detained him.

"Since you are here, Mr. Henderson," he began in his most impressive manner, "I may as well dispose of another matter which sooner or later must come up between us. It is of a purely personal nature and need have no bearing whatever upon our business relations."

Buck was quite calm now, and settled himself comfortably in his chair, as the banker continued.

“Let me first state that every man is conceded the right to conduct his domestic affairs in the manner which he may deem wisest and most pleasing to himself; consequently, I have no comment to offer upon your recent marriage. That is your private affair, and I therefore refrain from the expression of any opinion regarding your matrimonial venture. I would add, however, that inasmuch as you have in the past been a frequent visitor at my home, Mrs. Kingsley deems it her duty to inform you that our former social relations with you cannot be resumed. The distinction in social status between the ladies of my family and the woman you have chosen to make your wife presents an impassible barrier, and my wife begs me to state that she cannot meet Mrs. Henderson. She thought it wiser and kinder that I should tell you this privately, thereby avoiding a possible future complication which might needlessly embarrass and humiliate you. I trust I have made the matter quite plain, Mr. Henderson, and that I have not been unduly harsh in imparting the information.”

Buck's face went a trifle stern, as the banker concluded, and there was an unusual glint in his eyes, as he responded:

“You have acquitted yourself beautifully, Kingsley, and I think I have absorbed about all

the venom with which Madame Kingsley's shaft was coated. Kindly convey to the good lady my compliments and say to her that I fully appreciate the delicacy of her position and quite understand that, as the acknowledged leader in society, the quasi moral godmother of the community, she must needs draw the line rather closely and could scarcely risk her high supremacy by receiving into her charmed and sacred circle a woman who had once made a mistake, and the yet more fatal error of having her fault discovered. Permit me to congratulate Madame Kingsley upon the proud position she has attained and to voice the hope that no evilly disposed person will ever remind her that her husband, the highly respected banker, was once a defaulter and a fugitive from justice."

"Sir, you are insolent!" indignantly began the banker, as he hastily rose, but his face was livid with a great fear, and his hands shook as with palsy, when Buck, sternly and silently, pointed to the chair, into which he obediently collapsed.

"Better keep your seat and take it easy, Kingsley," resumed the younger man. "I have three or four things to say, and I advise you to listen as you never listened before. As I was saying, it is devoutly to be hoped that no one will be unkind enough to remind your estimable wife of her dis-

tinguished husband's unpublished record, and the fact that his real name is John Kingsley Barnes, but for convenience and other good and sufficient reasons, he many years ago dropped his surname and has since masqueraded as John Kingsley. It would also be most cruel and uncharitable to remind her that her first born, the curled and scented scion of the noble house of Kingsley, her Freddie, arrived by the "rapid transit route" and came perilously near beating the marriage certificate into town. I know the Kingsley history from Genesis to Revelations, particularly the Revelation section, and if you insist upon it, I am prepared to give you the inside details of that wheat deal you got into last winter, when you used over three hundred thousand of the bank's money to pull you through. I know a lot more about you, but the three items mentioned will serve to draw a parallel upon which I will now put you to an inquiry. Assuming that I make public all that I know of the Kingsleys; which family, yours or mine, is the most likely to first receive the social *coup de grace* in this community? There are many in this town over whom you and your wife have lorded for years, and I've a faint suspicion that the story I can tell would please them greatly, and that they would hugely enjoy the Kingsley downfall."

There was abject terror in the face of the old banker, as he appealingly extended his arms and, in a broken voice, pleaded for mercy.

“For God’s sake, Mr. Henderson, how have you learned all these things, and do you propose to expose us? Do you mean to ruin me, my wife and my children? Don’t do it, Mr. Henderson, please don’t do it. I beg you to have pity on my gray hairs and don’t bring me to my death in shame and disgrace.”

Consumed with fear, he now groveled on his knees before the younger man. Buck regarded him gravely, and again pointed to the chair. “Sit there, Kingsley,” he said. “I haven’t finished yet. You ask how I gained all this information. Well, I got it just as I got my money. I dug for it. Anticipating that you might some day attempt a grand stand play with me, I hired three of Pinkerton’s best men and for the past six months they have been looking up records, yours and others in this interesting village. At the present writing it is safe to assume that I know more concerning the inner life of the society dames of this town than their own husbands will ever know, and it is a moral certainty that I know more about the husbands than the wives have ever dreamed of. I spent time and money gathering all this unfragrant data concerning the

Kingsleys and other nice people; not with a view of injuring anyone, but solely as a safeguard and protection to the dear little woman who bears my name and will, I hope, bear my children. While I was in the investigating business I looked up Katherine Wolfe's record, too, and then I married her. I love my wife, Kingsley; furthermore, I am proud of her, and I don't propose that any of these would-be 'I-am-holier-than-thou' sort of people shall hurt her or make her unhappy by raking up the past. I don't care a whoop about myself; you and your crowd might think or say what you liked concerning me, and it would pass unchallenged; but I am not only my wife's husband, I am also her proper protector, and that protection she shall have. She made a mistake and she has suffered for it, as only a good woman can suffer. We all make mistakes, and sooner or later we all pay. You made some of yours years ago, and you made another just now when you swelled up in your fancied security and attempted to preach down at me. You are now sweating blood because you think payday has arrived, and because you know that I know. Your wife's mistake will look very big and very black to her when you tell her what I have said and she will suffer an agony of fear as she begins to pay. Humanity is pretty much alike, the world

over, and human nature has not materially changed since the beginning of things. We are all a bit lawless in our loves and hates, and some of us have been lawless in our business dealings. Every man and every woman carries in his or her soul the memory of some fault, some crime, some secret vice, or some hidden thing, be it small or great, of which they are ashamed and which they closely guard from public knowledge. I venture the broad assertion that among all the teeming millions of the earth there exists not one human creature of mature years who is not today concealing, or trying to conceal, some present fault or some past mistake. Basing my conclusions upon this point of view, I must of necessity have large charity for my neighbors' faults, but I exact from them a like charity toward me and mine. I have no desire to injure you nor the aristocratic old gossip who presides over your household, and so long as you keep your hands and your tongues off the Henderson family, your history will be safe in my hands. The same ruling applies to a lot more of the social Moguls of this community. Tell Madame Kingsley to call in her satellites and tell them just what I have said to you; give it to them straight, and let them understand where they stand. The girl I pulled out of the floodwater is now my wife;

she is to live in this community, and I propose that she shall live here happily. She knows nothing of my Pinkerton work, and, please God, she never shall know. She remembers her mistakes and is timid and full of dread concerning her future in this town; so you will tell your crowd there must be no dirty work, no patronizing airs, no raising of eyebrows or talk. I won't have it. I have their pedigrees and if I hear from them just one unkind or sneering word regarding Kate's past, by God, I'll rip the lid off and spill the whole unsavory mess. Just to clinch this thing, I propose to have a private interview with about a dozen men and women of this town's high and mighty, and I'm going to lay my cards face up on the table. After that, if they want to buck the tiger, they will find the game wide open. One thing more, and I have finished. Your wife and her friends may call on Mrs. Henderson, or they may leave her alone, just as they choose. If they see fit to visit the house on the hill, they will find there a very charming little lady, who will return their calls. If they fail to do so, be assured she will trouble them not at all. But in any event, first and last and all the time, there is to be no wagging of tongues. Tell them to tack this warning up in the front part of their heads where they won't overlook it. The next

warning will be an earthquake. Good day, Mr. Kingsley." Then the door closed on his broad back.

A twelvemonth slipped past, a year of great happiness and great prosperity for the owner of the "Silent Friend." Billy, the marshal, sat with Buck upon the broad balcony of Castle Henderson, watching the last gilding of the setting sun upon the tall crags of Bald Mountain. Below them lay the town, while over it the smoke of Henderson's new smelter curled lazily against the western sky. For a time there was silence between the friends, then the marshal spoke.

"Not much water in Indian creek this year," he remarked. "Not much like she was three years ago this month when the big water came down. Lord!" he aded, musingly, "what a lot has happened since that day! Buck! you have done a lot of big things, but the biggest and best thing you did was to marry that little woman and make her a sort o' society boss of the camp. At first I was afeard you had made a mistake in setting up a home in this town; afeard there would be talk and all that sort of thing, you know; but, by gum, the little girl won out, all right, and they say that the musical doin's she gave last week was just a little bit the finest thing ever pulled off in these diggin's, and that the wives and daughters

of all the High Priests and Pharisees were on deck. I tell you, Buck, that wife of yours is one in a thousand."

"One in a million would be nearer the mark, Billy," observed the big fellow smilingly. "I, too, was a bit uneasy about it at first, but I learned that a man with a mine and a little assistance from Pinkerton can accomplish a good many things, even in the social field."

"Pinkerton?" inquired the marshal; "what the devil has Pinkerton got to do with it?"

"Not a thing on earth, Billy," laughed Buck; "I was only thinking of a story I once heard. Come on, Kate is calling us to supper."

OLD ROGERS.

There had been a fight in the foot-hills about Camp Thomas. A band of Tonto Basin Apaches, caught red-handed while raiding a rancho, had been roughly handled by a detachment of the ——th, and, as they belonged to Cochise's fighting force, it was a foregone conclusion that the wily old leader would retaliate by a general break from the reservation and a big raid in the direction of Sonora.

The spring grass was abundant, the war ponies were "hog-fat," and, as it was known that the head men of the tribe had been gathered in secret council, Colonel Trenholm, the new commander, had warned department headquarters that serious trouble might be expected. As usual, the department had made no adequate provision for such a contingency, and the small, widely scattered posts were ill prepared or equipped for the long campaign which might be necessary before old Cochise would again acknowledge himself whipped and, with many promises to be "good Injun," consent to return to his tepees.

Night after night the signal fires had told that deviltry was abroad, so the little command at Fort Bolton was not surprised when, late one night, the operator awoke the Colonel to tell him that the wires had been cut and all communication with other posts at an end.

Next morning a courier arrived from San Carlos agency to report that Cochise and at least four hundred of his braves were missing. The first move in the game had been made, and no one might safely surmise where the old fox would next appear. If however, anything was to be done for the protection of the settlers and ranchmen along the upper Gila, a strong force must follow at high speed in the wake of the raiders, pressing them so closely that they would have scant time for the usual depredations. So reasoned the powers at Washington, and orders for immediate mobilization were hurried to the various detachments scattered throughout the territory. But almost at once the hunters experienced difficulty in tracking their quarry. Within three hours after the break Cochise had broken his four hundred fighters into a dozen small bands, which had scattered to every quarter of the compass, each leaving a broad trail and making it impossible for the scouts to locate the rendezvous where they were sure to come together. It was

out of the question to follow all the trails, so the scouts came in for orders.

Colonel Trenholm had a hard nut to crack, and the knowledge of it did not tend to improve his none too gentle temper. His dusky opponent had blocked the game at the very outset, and now the Colonel must plan a campaign, having no known objective. Of what avail to concentrate half a thousand troopers at one point, when the Indians they were to fight might be whooping things up two hundred miles away in an unlooked for direction? In this dilemma the Colonel asked department headquarters for instructions and was curtly informed that, as he was on the scene and in command, he was expected to do something, which, of course, must be the right thing—and do it quick.

The Colonel's language, upon receipt of these very explicit instructions, was indelicate and uncomplimentary to say the least. But for all his fuming and sharp tongue, "Old Peppers," as the men called him, had the reputation of being a fighter; which he now strengthened by speedily arriving at his conclusions and sending fresh couriers to the outlying posts, ordering all, save small detachments for garrison duty, to report at once at Camp Thomas.

The three troops at Fort Bolton were included in the order, and given six hours in which

to prepare and equip for a campaign which might mean six weeks or more in the saddle. At once the usually quiet little garrison was seething with the orderly and methodical excitement of preparation for a hard riding and, as the men devoutly hoped, hard fighting expedition. Straps and buckles were carefully gone over; reins and ropes were inspected; knapsacks packed with a view to the maximum of comfort with the minimum of weight; horses' feet trimmed or newly shod, and weapons furbished to the last degree of cleanliness. "Old Peppers" should learn that they knew the game and, with half a chance, could clean out the whole Apache nation.

The Colonel was worried; that was plain to all his subalterns, and it was at this juncture that Captain Singleton made bold to offer a suggestion. There was, he explained, an old miner about eight miles back in the hills who was said to know more about the Apaches than any man in the territory, and who was also acquainted with every foot of the country. It was reported that the Indians held him in some sort of superstitious awe, believing his mine to be haunted ground, and leaving him unmolested in all their raids. Wouldn't it be a good plan to send for Old Rogers and secure his advice and assistance, or guidance, in picking a short trail to Fort Thomas?

Utterly in the dark as to the actual whereabouts of his cunning opponent, the Colonel gladly availed himself of any possible source of information, and, acting instantly upon the Captain's suggestion, dispatched a mounted messenger to Rogers' mine in the hills, bidding the old man come at once to Fort Bolton. The courier was instructed not to spare his mount: so, within an hour and a half he was back again, but alone. He reported that he had been halted on the trail a few hundred feet below the mouth of the cave which formed the entrance to Rogers' stronghold, where the following conversation was held:

He saw no one, but a voice had ordered a peremptory "Halt! where are you going?"

"To Rogers' mine," responded the trooper.

"What do you want?" asked the voice.

"I have a message from the Colonel commanding for Mr. Rogers."

"I am Rogers. Deliver your message."

"The Colonel orders you to report at once to him at Fort Bolton."

"Orders what?" questioned the voice.

"Orders that you accompany me to the post without delay."

"Well, you may say to your Colonel that, as nearly as I can compute the distance, he would travel no farther in visiting me than I should

be obliged to travel should I do myself the honor of visiting him. It's about eight miles going or coming. Present my compliments to your commander, and tell him what I have said. That's all." The trooper took leave of the voice and returned to deliver the message.

The Colonel was furious and again delivered himself of much unparliamentary language.

"The impudent old scamp!" he growled; "I'll fix him. Here, Kennedy!" he commanded, addressing the grizzled sergeant of Troop B, "take six men and an extra horse for the prisoner, and go after that man Rogers; bring him here within two hours, and let there be no nonsense about it." Kennedy saluted and was gone. From the old Sergeant was learned what followed.

Reaching the mouth of the cave they had dismounted, when they were accosted by a voice from somewhere in the interior, inquiring their business. Kennedy stated his mission and advised the unseen Mr. Rogers to come out quietly and quickly, thereby obviating the necessity of more forceful measures.

"Force—did you say?" queried the voice.

Again Kennedy explained that his orders were imperative and, in case Mr. Rogers declined to come peacefully, then he, Kennedy, must surely use force. "The question is," said the old Ser-

geant, "will yez ride along wid me, like a dacint man, or do yez prefer a good thumpin', and then bein' tied and slung across a saddle like a sack of government oats?"

There was silence for a time; then to the ears of the astounded troopers came the calmly defiant answer.

"You men are acting under orders, so I must overlook your impudence; otherwise I should take each of you by the scruff and pitch you over the ledge out yonder, just to teach you better manners. That Colonel of yours is an ass; tell him I said so. Having taken into his noddle the idea that he desires to interview me, instead of sending a courteous request he sends me a peremptory order that I shall forthwith hasten to the foot of his throne and there prostrate myself. When I decline to do his bidding, he sends over seven bow-legged cavalrymen to arrest me. By what right or license, or upon what charge, does he attempt the arrest of an American citizen? Military necessity, perhaps? Admitting this exigency he might at least have conducted the affair like a gentleman, and treated the civilian as a white man in asking his attendance; but this high and mighty tin soldier prefers the absurdity of drum-head methods. Arrest me, indeed! Does he imagine that a man who, single-handed and alone,

has for a dozen years held out against the Apache tribe, can be brought in by a Corporal's guard? Bah! That Colonel of yours should send his head back to the shop for repairs; it needs fixing. Now, if you distinguished gentlemen care to amuse yourselves by looking about my cave, you have my permission to wander at will; but don't molest things. I shall be very near you all the time, though you will not see me. I might mention, incidentally, that this cave is planted with a score of mines of high explosive, all under my constant control and which may be exploded at will. You are standing directly over one of them now, and I could easily blow the lot of you into kingdom come." Kennedy's hair stiffened a bit, as they gingerly stepped to one side, but he was no coward. Moving cautiously in the direction of the voice, he responded:

" 'Tis a fine speechmaker ye are, Mister Rogers, and I'll be admittin' that ye have the best of the argymint thus far; but orders is orders, and if ye think that Dinnis Kennedy is goin' back widout havin' a thry for yure arrist, then ye are barkin' up the wrong tree. Come on, boys!" And, striking a match, he went creeping down into the black depths of the cavern. Match after match was thus consumed, the faint light disclosing a wide and somewhat winding cavern, the roof

barely discernible in the darkness, while from either side yawned smaller passages leading off into the unexplored silence. Further into the granite heart of the mountain they slowly ventured, till Kennedy's supply of matches was exhausted. From each of his men he demanded a fresh supply, when, to their dismay, it was discovered that not a match was to be had in the party. Owing to the twists and turns in the passage the entrance was no longer visible, and they now found themselves helpless in the darkness of Rogers' cave, utterly at the mercy of the man they had come to arrest. Two of his troopers became panic-stricken and shouted wildly, but the old Sergeant quieted them. Then to the darkness he spoke:

"Mister Rogers," he said, "I'm assumin' that ye are a man of yure word, and be the same token I'm thinking ye are not many feet away; so I'll talk straight to yez, man to man. Here's sivin sojers sent out by ould Peppers wid orders to bring in a man who lives in a hole in the hills. We have nawthin' whatsoever to do with the rights or wrongs of the case, nor do we give a d——n whether the Colonel tramps on the corner of Mister Rogers' citizenship; nor do we care a cuss how many big words Mister Rogers shoots into the Colonel's dignity. What we are most wantin' at

the prisint time is to git out into the daylight and away from this bloody pit o' darkness; thin we will go back and tell the ould man that this wasn't Mister Rogers' visitin' day. Now would ye lend me the loan of a few matches, and lave us bid yez good-day, Mister Rogers?"

A low chuckle, which seemed to come from the roof immediately above, was the only answer; then a sudden clink, as of two metals brought sharply together, and the cavern was aglow from the light of a half dozen or more lamps, or lanterns, which appeared simultaneously in different parts of the cave. The nearest one was only a few yards distant, and toward it strode Kennedy, for the evident purpose of investigation. Reaching it, he stretched forth his hand, then withdrew it, with the forceful, if inelegant, expression, "Wellibedam!" His hand had come in contact with a smooth, hard surface, a small mirror; the lamp flame was merely a reflection. Quickly turning, his eye at once caught the rays of the light from which this reflection came, and again his quick footsteps rang on the stone floor as he clanked diagonally across the passage. Again his hand met the smooth, hard surface of a mirror. Once more his eyes sought the mother light, this time gleaming from a crevice in the roof, far beyond his reach. He laughed aloud. "It's

a great genius ye are, Mister Rogers, wid yer onseen prisince and yer make-believe shandyleers. I take me hat off to ye, wheriver ye are and whatever ye look like. Now, boys, we'll be moseyin' for the post. So long, Mister Rogers; ye have me word for it that the illigant entertainment ye did be givin' us will be truthfully reported to Colonel Trenholm."

"Colonel Trenholm?" asked the voice.

"Colonel Trenholm; ould Peppers; the man who sint us to arrist yez."

There was another silence, when the voice inquired: "Isn't the Colonel a new man here?"

"He is," answered the old Sergeant.

"Where is he from, and how long has he been in command?" pursued the voice.

"From Fort Leavenworth, and he has been givin' orders in Arizony for the past three weeks, responded Kennedy.

Another pause, when the voice, which in the meantime seemed to draw nearer, spoke once more: "Why does he send for me?"

"Naythur the Colonel nor the Secretary of War takes the trouble to consult wid me, Mister Rogers, so I can't tell yez why he's so stuck on seein' ye; but in the ranks the story goes that the ould man is in a hell of a hole, not knowin' B from a bull's foot consarnin' old Cochise, and hearin'

that youse did be knowin' a heap about th' Injuns, he makes bold to consult yez on matters of grand strategy. Are ye not flattered, Mister Rogers?"

There was a new note in the voice, as the reply came; a note of finality, stern and peremptory:

"You will return at once to the post and report to the Colonel that Rogers refuses to be captured and led to him like a runaway dog, but that he will come voluntarily, reaching headquarters two hours after you arrive. Don't lose time on the trail, waiting for me or devising plans for my capture. You will only be wasting time and, if I am not mistaken, time is a valuable asset to him just now."

"We'll go straight to camp; trust me for that. It's a horse on me, and I have a large and sufficient bellyful of huntin' the Rogers family for one day. I'll be tellin' ould Peppers all ye say, but don't take it hard if he forgits to order out the regimental band to play 'Hail to the Chief' when yez come marchin' in. Good-day, Mister Rogers."

Kennedy's troopers rode hard on the return trail and promptly reported that they had been unable to find Rogers; had only heard his voice from the gloom of the cavern, and that, refusing to be arrested, he would voluntarily visit the post,

arriving two hours later. Rogers' criticism of the Colonel's methods, which Kennedy had not failed to repeat, was like putting salt on a sore. Old Peppers' anger knew no bounds, as he discussed the matter with Captain Singleton in the privacy of headquarters office; but time was pressing, and he must wait another opportunity to vent his spleen on the miner. "Singleton," he said, "I must be at Thomas at the earliest possible moment; so I will start at once with merely an escort. I have no confidence in that villain Rogers' promise to be here in two hours; but his knowledge of the country may be of value, so you will wait two hours and then follow me with the entire command, leaving twenty men as a garrison guard. If Rogers comes, you will place him at once under arrest and force him to guide. If he demurs, clap him in irons and tie him to a horse. Make as good time as you can, taking advantage of as many cut-offs in trails as Rogers may know of."

Again Singleton suggested: "Colonel, don't you think we might get better results out of this man if I explained the case to him and asked him to lend his assistance? If he is sullen or ugly under arrest, he might easily disclaim knowledge of any trails other than the established routes, in which case he would be of little service."

“Well, well; perhaps you are right,” answered the Colonel. “Handle him in your own fashion, but see that he accompanies the command, even if you have to iron him. I’ll settle with him later and will teach him to be less free with his insolent messages.” He then hastily took leave of Mrs. Trenholm and his daughter, Miss Winifred, and went clattering down the divide, followed by his escort.

Two hours later a tall figure emerged from the jumble of foot-hills just back of the stables and, walking rapidly, crossed the parade toward the Colonel’s quarters. He was an elderly man, more than six feet in height, who, despite his years, carried himself erectly and moved with the ease and elasticity of a cadet. A heavy, grizzled beard, growing nearly to his eyes, completely hid every feature save the bold, aquiline nose and the clear, gray eyes, which looked steadily and fearlessly out from beneath the shaggy brows. He was dressed in the usual garb of miner or prospector and was splendidly armed. At the door of the office he was met by Captain Singleton, whom he saluted, and, after stating that his name was Rogers, asked to see Colonel Trenholm.

“Come in, Mr. Rogers,” said the Captain; “the Colonel was called away hurriedly, but left a message for you.”

Without subterfuge and with no reference to the friction occasioned by Rogers' refusal to obey the Colonel's summons, Singleton plunged at once into the matter in hand; explained fully the flight of Cochise and his fighting men, and the plight of the military; confessed his complete ignorance of the plans or the present whereabouts of the Apaches; the anxiety and mental perturbation of the Colonel; detailed the movement of troops then in progress, and wound up with a frank appeal to Rogers for advice and assistance.

Not once, during the ten minutes consumed by the Captain's explanation, did the grey eyes leave those of the speaker; then he said gravely: "I should have known of all this six hours ago. Your Colonel blundered in not appealing to me in this manner, instead of sending me a peremptory order in the first instance. I am at his service and yours, and will do all I can to help you. Excuse me if I waive useless formalities, ask direct questions and advise freely. I believe you stated that the Colonel, as commanding officer, has ordered the troops from nearby stations to concentrate at Thomas? Now, what does he propose to do when he gets them there? He has no reliable information as to the direction Cochise has taken. How does he propose to pursue or attack without this knowledge?"

“But,” responded the Captain, “you forget that Cochise’s force is supposed to be nearly four hundred warriors. In order to cope successfully with that cunning old devil, the Colonel must have a larger force than is now at any one post; so he was obliged to concentrate somewhere, and Fort Thomas seemed the better point.”

“I do not presume to criticise his strategy, I am merely questioning the wisdom of bringing these scattered detachments together before he knows where he will need them. I assume that he is leaving an adequate garrison guard at each post from which he is drawing troops?”

“Well,” admitted Singleton, “I am not altogether sure on that point. The guard left at the various posts is sufficient for ordinary garrison duty, but wholly inadequate in case of trouble; for example, we are to leave only twenty men here at Bolton.”

“Good God!” exclaimed Rogers. “Do you mean that only twenty men are to be left to guard these women and children and non-combatants?”

“Those are the orders left by the Colonel when he started for Thomas two hours since,” replied Singleton. “He is of the opinion that Cochise will swing toward Sonora and will not molest this region. He evidently feels no concern for

this post, as he leaves here his wife and Miss Winifred, his daughter."

"His daughter and wife here!" exclaimed the old man, in strange agitation, "Is the man mad? What right has he heedlessly to expose his family and those other helpless ones to the mercy of a horde of the most implacable fiends on earth, simply because he opines that this post is safe from attack? Of what value will be his opinion, with a hundred Apaches butchering his twenty troopers and carrying off the women to a yet worse fate?"

"Why, Mr. Rogers, you certainly don't anticipate anything of the sort, do you?" asked the Captain, greatly disturbed by the old man's sudden excitement.

"I anticipate nothing, or everything, as the Indians may or may not find opportunity for devilment. You may be sure that Cochise will do the thing least expected. His spies are everywhere; this post and every other post is being watched night and day by hawk-eyed runners, who will constantly report to their chief every move that is made. If you leave this camp uncovered in the manner you propose it is not only possible, but probable, that it will be attacked as soon as the main command is beyond reach of recall. There may be one hundred or three hundred of

those red devils hidden within five miles of this spot. If this be the case, can you imagine that they will forego such a made-to-order opportunity? In my opinion, Cochise will avoid any collision with larger bodies of troops. Why should he risk an engagement, when he may secure scalps and plunder by raiding a practically defenseless garrison, left helpless by the blunders of the military?"

The Captain was very grave, as he said, "You really alarm me, Mr. Rogers, with your gloomy forecast, but I don't see that I can now improve conditions. My orders are explicit and I must move at once, following the Colonel to Camp Thomas with the entire command, leaving only twenty men as a guard."

After a moment's silence the miner spoke. "I fully understand that, as a soldier, you are in duty bound to obey the orders of your superior; but, if later developments or later information so alter conditions that the carrying out of your instructions means placing in jeopardy the safety, perhaps the lives, of helpless people, might not you exceed your orders to the extent of leaving a larger force here?"

"But there is no new development or new information," argued Singleton; "nothing more than a civilian's surmise that, under certain con-

tingencies, the post may be attacked. Possibly your fears are well grounded, and I confess that I shall feel like a criminal in leaving these women with so little protection; but, should you be wrong in your conclusions, and if there be a big fight down the Gila, where every trooper is needed, you can understand the position I should be in had I left a hundred men at Bolton. You ask me, merely upon a supposition, to risk being cashiered from the service. I can't do it."

"But I tell you there is danger, great danger, in leaving this garrison with so meagre a guard," persisted Rogers. "I know these Indians, and I say again that you are jeopardizing the lives of these non-combatants if you follow your orders."

"Possibly; but I must obey them," retorted the Captain.

"Very well. Will you not at least take these women and children to Camp Thomas under the escort of your command?" urged the miner.

"Impossible, for two reasons," explained Singleton; "first, because we have no transportation for them, and secondly, I am ordered to move at all speed to the rendezvous; which, of course, would be out of the question with such impedimenta. We must be moving now, Mr. Rogers. A

mount has been provided for you and we will start at once."

"No, Captain!" said the old man, rising; "I will not accompany you. I shall remain here and try to save the women, if my fears prove to be well grounded."

"Again I must disappoint you," replied the Captain, firmly. "You are to join this expedition and are expected to guide us through the best and shortest trails. So, further discussion is useless."

"Ah! Does that mean that I am under arrest?"

"You may put it so, if you like; though I had not intended resorting to that extremity, unless forced to it by refusal on your part." Then, stepping to the door, the Captain directed an orderly to sound "Boots and Saddles" for instant departure.

Old Rogers paced to and fro in the narrow office, his face working with strong emotion, but no further word escaped him. Within five minutes the three troops filed across the parade and over the ridge on their long ride to the San Carlos Agency. In the lead rode Singleton, and by his side, erect and soldierly, sitting his mount like a true cavalryman, was the gray-haired old miner.

Within a mile he silently indicated that they

should leave the government road, taking a rather dimly defined trail which led higher into the hills. It was soon noticed that this trail kept to the crest of the ridges, and that frequent rearward views of Fort Bolton might be had. At each point of vantage Old Rogers was seen to turn and earnestly scan the little post; then, after a long look, spur once more into the lead.

It was a rough country he was taking them through, but fairly good going, and the troopers jogged merrily enough, cracking jokes and speculating on the number of days which might pass before a scrimmage could be hoped for. For three hours the march continued and, in the waning afternoon, the scrub-pine and mesquit cast long shadows on the trail, as the head of the little column, after a half hour in a rugged defile, emerged upon a comparatively broad plateau, from which could be seen the little camp they had left, now a brown dot in the shimmering sunlight.

All afternoon Old Rogers had ridden silently, answering the Captain's remarks or inquiries in monosyllables and evidently deeply engrossed with his own thoughts. As he reached the plateau he again looked long in the direction of Fort Bolton; then suddenly he found words. "Let me take your glasses, quick!" he said to Singleton. Through the binoculars he studied the distant post

for a brief minute; then he handed the glasses to the Captain. "Look!" he said. "Look! and then listen to what I have to say."

As Singleton gazed off in to the southwest old Rogers spoke rapidly: "You see they are already attacking, though it comes two or three hours earlier than I expected. I planned to be back there when it came; but, as usual, the Apaches did the unexpected thing and began their deviltry while we were still in view of the camp." Then he answered the Captain's look of blank surprise, by adding, "Yes, I meant to be back there before they got to work. A mile from here our trail passes through a rocky gorge, so narrow that only a single horeman may pass. In it are a dozen pockets, or cut-offs, and it was there I intended to give you the slip and ride back to Bolton. But all that will now be unnecessary. Look! Look!" He pointed again to the far off little fort, where a column of bluish yellow smoke might now be plainly seen rising slowly heavenward. "They have fired the hay barns and stables. Well," he demanded, sharply, "what are you going to do? There is not a minute to be wasted!"

The Captain's face was grave with anxiety, as he hesitatingly made reply: "I—I hardly know. My orders were imperative—"

"Oh, damn your orders!" thundered the old

miner. "You are a soldier, aren't you? and fighting is your trade, isn't it? Your Colonel is trying to locate the hostiles, is he not? Well, there they are, right before you at Fort Bolton, making an attack which will end in the massacre of fifty or more women and children, as well as your precious garrison guard of twenty men. Yet you hesitate because of your orders! Your Colonel's people are down yonder, surrounded by Cochise's bloodhounds. Do you think he would temporize or hesitate if he were here? Move quickly, Captain! For the love of Christ, move quick! There is not a minute to spare." The old man's voice was almost pleading, as he continued. "If you won't return, let me lead a hundred men, or fifty, in an effort to save the garrison. I have seen service and I know the game."

"Thank you, Mr. Rogers," responded the Captain, stiffly; "we are not in need of commanding officers today. Your business is to guide. The entire command will return." Then, lifting his voice, he gave the sharp command, "'Bout face! March!" and the three troops, with himself and Rogers in the lead, went hurrying down the return trail.

The outward march, covering fourteen miles, had required three hours, and the mind of both commander and guide was busy with the problem

as to the time needed in the return; would they be in time at the end of that return ride? So the miner was not surprised when Singleton spurred his horse alongside and asked, "Can we make it, Rogers?" "God knows," was Rogers' husky response. "It all depends how good a fight those twenty men put up. The Apaches think this force well out of the way, so they may not rush the place at once, preferring the safer method of picking off the men one by one. If they adopt these tactics we may reach them before—God! we must get there!" he burst out. Then calming himself and speaking rapidly, he resumed: "Captain, I have a plan which, in my opinion, promises the best chance of success. These savages saw us leave the post, know exactly how many men you have, and that there are no other troops within seventy-five miles; so the trail we came out on is the only one they will watch. At the end of this gulch there is an old trail turning sharply to the left, which will lead us, unseen, through the canyons to within a mile of Bolton. At that point you should divide your force, one-half to ride straight up the slope to the camp; the other half, still sheltered by the ridge, to cross the divide a half mile further up and attack from the rear. There is no telling how many Apaches we shall find; it may be only a small war party, or we may encounter Cochise's

entire band; so we must prepare for an ugly fight. Nothing will so disconcert an Indian as to discover that he has been outwitted, and that is why I propose this plan."

There was frank admiration in the officer's face and all the stiffness of manner had gone as he extended his hand. "Mr. Rogers," he said, "I want to apologize to you. I have been wrong and you have been right from the start; I should have heeded your advice in the first instance. Your plan is brilliant in the extreme; much better than any I could devise, and shall be acted upon." There was nothing of indecision or hesitation about him now. He was going into a fight, the alert, quick-eyed, cool-brained soldier.

With the widening of the trail as it turned into the canyon, and the consequent better going, Old Rogers led the way in a gallop, which precluded further conversation between the two men.

Mile after mile, through rocky gorge and narrow defile, across boulder-strewn divides, and again down through the dry, sanded floors of ancient washouts, never at fault as to roadway or direction, on and on like an avenging Nemesis, rode the old prospector, leading the eager troopers and their no less eager officers, to the grisly carnival which awaited their coming.

It was to be the last ride for many of those

lads in blue, though they thought little and recked less, as they followed in the long, swinging cavalry gallop that tall, sinewy figure with its grizzled beard and long hair tossing from beneath the wide-brimmed hillsman's hat. Ere the sun went down two score of those gallant fellows would be lying dead about the bare, sun-baked parade of Camp Bolton, some a huddled inert mass under fallen horses; others outstretched, with limbs and features decently composed, staring with sightless eyes into the evening sky, the last sound to assail the dulled ear being the din of conflict, the hoarse shouts of avenging comrades, mingled with the shriller war cries of savage foemen; the noise of many guns, or the whining drone of death-laden rifle bullets. All this was to be theirs within the hour; yet, right gladly did they spur on, for was not this a chance for a fight, and was not fighting the game they loved?

Scarce an hour had elapsed when Old Rogers drew rein at the foot of a sloping ridge and, pointing upward, said, "A mile up that ridge is Camp Bolton. It will be in plain view after passing those boulders yonder."

As the command came to a halt and the clatter of hoofs was stilled, to every ear came distinctly the sound of scattering shots and the fierce yells of the attacking Indians. For one long min-

ute the men listened breathlessly for the deeper-toned reports of the Springfields, which told them that the little garrison guard was still fighting; then came Singleton's ringing order to the junior captains:

"Brady, you will proceed with your troop a half mile farther up this ravine; then cross over the divide and attack from the south. Captain Elmore, with half his men, will accompany you. The remainder of Troop F, under Lieutenant Wilson, will remain with me. Spare your horses as much as possible on the hill, then ride hard and charge home. Open carbine fire as soon as you come within range, but don't waste your shots, and reserve your Colts for close work. If it comes to a mix-up, give them the steel. Remember! our first objective is to save those women; the next is to capture or kill every Apache this side of the Gila. Good luck and a good fight, gentlemen."

A half minute more and the divided command was once more spurring to the finish.

During this brief interval Old Rogers had ridden up the slope to the group of great boulders which hid them from the post, where he dismounted and peered cautiously toward the beleaguered garrison. In an instant he sprang back and, swing-

ing into the saddle, waved his arms and shouted hoarsely, "Come on! Come on!"

With a quick order to his followers, Singleton dashed forward to join the excited prospector, who still signaled frantically. From the angle in the trail beyond the rocks spread an appalling view. Smoke from ruined stables and burning barracks hung in the still air like a pall over the doomed post, while, darting and dodging among the adobe walls, were a hundred or more dark figures dancing, shouting and yelling like the fiends they were. The attack seemed to be directed upon one of the larger adobe buildings, which had thus far escaped the general devastation, and from which an occasional spurt of rifle smoke told of a gallant defense by the slender garrison. From the eastward, at right angles from the trail by which Rogers was leading the troops, across the sage-covered plateau, was scurrying another band of Indians numbering nearly three hundred. They were within a quarter of a mile of the burning barracks, and racing forward at top speed to join their brethren in the final butchery. In a flash Singleton realized the full scope of the disaster. A hundred of Cochise's warriors had been hovering about the post waiting to attack as soon as the troops were safely out of the way; and now fleet runners and signal smokes had brought the

main body of Apaches to complete the work of wiping out Fort Bolton. He knew from the louder chorus of savage yells that the reds had discovered the approaching soldiers, and that the stronghold of the defenders would now be rushed, and if the doors could be quickly battered in the slaughter would be complete. There would be no more cautious fighting on the part of the Apaches; they would risk everything for a minute of knife work among those women and children. The Captain groaned aloud as the possibilities all came home to him, and he whirled in his saddle to give a final order to his men; but no such order seemed necessary, for as his eye caught the grim and determined look on each trooper's face, he knew that every man in the command was riding his tired mount to the limit, and that when they reached their goal not one would falter. Content with this hurried survey of his force, he turned about to address an inquiry to Rogers, but the old prospector was no longer by his side. Far out in front of the galloping squadron sped a flying horseman, the wide sombrero discarded and the long gray hair floating loosely as he rode straight for the storm center ahead. As he lashed his horse to still greater speed, he was seen to lean forward and draw from its scabbard beneath his stirrup leather, the wicked-looking saddle gun,

which formed a part of his armament; then, turning, he fiercely beckoned forward the oncoming troop, while above the thunder of hoof-beats came his strident call: "Come on! For the love of God, come on!"

There was an answering shout from the men, as they drove home the spurs and rode desperately to the rescue.

The Apache reinforcements now gained the enclosure, and in an instant a hundred savage hands had siezed a large timber lying near and were fiercely battering at the main entrance of the larger adobe building; while a large force, from the shelter of fallen walls and other debris, opened fire upon the rapidly approaching troop.

At first the bullets fell short or sang harmlessly overhead, but in a half minute more, as the range grew less, a horse went down, and here and there a man pitched forward from the saddle, as the leaden messengers found their billet. This was to be a fight, not a foot race, for the Indians were loath to surrender their advantage till that door was down and the knives had drunk their fill. As this fact became apparent the lines in old Rogers' face grew deeper and more tense. Turning once more to the men, who were close up, like a trumpet call his voice rang out: "Boys, they will try to hold us off till they can butcher

the women. Don't stop! For Christ's sake, don't stop, but follow me!"

Then upon the evening air rose the old —th Cavalry's fighting cheer. The barking of the carbines began and the old prospector knew that the grim fighting machine at his back would not fail. But with each moment the fire of the Apaches became more galling, and man after man went down. They were within two hundred yards of the besieged building, when a particularly vicious volley emptied a half dozen saddles and halted the command in temporary confusion. Again it was the call of Old Rogers which rallied them: "This way, boys, don't stop here! yonder is where we are needed! Come on!"

Resonantly that great voice sounded above the din and to it each soldier responded, urging forward his drooping horse and firing rapidly into the dusky throng which confronted them. With another cheer they burst through the hostile line and across the parade toward the large building, the Colonel's quarters, around which swirled the main vortex of the attack. Determined not to be balked of their prey the main body of Apaches made a stand in the open space before the building, while behind the protecting fringe of warriors three score braves were beating and splintering the oaken door, which was the last defense

of the fifty or more men and women who had been hurried inside at the first alarm.

In the annals of the —th are recorded many splendid deeds of the men who dared and died in that short ride across the old parade ground at Camp Bolton. Led by Old Rogers, that little band of less than one hundred and fifty troopers plunged gallantly forward into four hundred of Cochise's chosen and well armed fighters. There was neither time nor place for military manœuvre or squadron formation. It was each man for himself and for those helpless ones yonder, behind the weakening door. Once more, above the shots, the shouts of the men and the screeching of the savages, was heard the deep, bell-like tones of the old miner: "Don't stop, boys! Come on to the door! The door!"

A horse sank down and with it went gallant little Wilson of Troop F, to be dragged aside and knifed to death in an instant. Brave old Sergeant Ridgeway sprang from his horse to the assistance of his officer, but was overwhelmed and died under the steel. Corporal Murphy, "Laughing Danny," as they called him, had emptied his gun and was in the act of drawing his saber, when a pair of lean brown hands pushed a rifle within six inches of his face and poor Danny's laugh was hushed forever. Like a flash a blade whirled

down, a savage head toppled hideously above a gaping, half severed neck, and a savage face was beaten to a pulp beneath the steel-shod hoofs of Kennedy's horse. It was meet that Kennedy's stroke should so swiftly avenge, for Danny had been his bunky and best loved friend.

Steadily the little command fought its way toward the building, hewing, hacking, killing as it went.

It was just here that the fiercest fighting occurred, as the Apaches made their last stand only a few rods from the door, which was now badly shattered and only held in place by the bolts and wide iron strap-hinges. Still at the forefront fought Rogers, his clubbed rifle cracking a skull with each swing of the sinewy arm. Suddenly his horse, shot through the head, lunged wildly forward, to fall prostrate in the very midst of the yelling Indians. A government ambulance stood near the door and it was across the tongue of the vehicle that the animal landed, breaking the stout oaken pole short off a half dozen feet from the smaller end. As the horse plunged headlong the Indians scattered for a moment, and in that brief time Old Rogers regained his feet, weaponless and separated from the advancing troops. One hurried glance about him, then he seized the broken wagon tongue and, swinging it aloft,

brought it down on the nearest redskin, crushing his head as though it were an egg shell. Again and again did those powerful arms swing their mighty flail, killing or crippling one or more of his foes with every stroke.

At this instant the wooden ram with which the savages had been hammering the door did its work; the door went down, and a dozen Tontos sprang for the opening, to be met by a blast in their very faces from the rifles of the surviving soldiers in the interior. For an instant the Indians hesitated, and in that instant Old Rogers was on them, fighting like a madman as he rained blow after blow with his ponderous weapon. But he was hard pressed, and this story would have ended in a different manner had not Kennedy and several of his men cut their way through and joined in the *melée*. Fierce and bloody was the fighting about the doorway, as once, twice, thrice the savages rushed the entrance, only to be beaten off by the little band of defenders, who were now joined by the soldiers from inside. In one inextricable swirl the fight raged on, when from behind the ruined stables burst Brady and Elmore with their hundred and fifty troopers, the thunder of hoof-beats and the banging of their carbines sounding a note of dismay to the Apaches. The surprise was complete and, within thirty seconds,

every Indian who could crawl was scurrying for the hills. Like a hurricane Singleton now led his reserve literally over the fleeing Tontos, riding them down, slashing and destroying; then, wheeling, he took his men through once more.

There was no parleying. If an Indian dropped his weapons and threw up his hands in token of surrender he was captured; otherwise he was killed. Many escaped to the hills, but when the fight was over a hundred were prisoners and as many more were past further deviltry.

Singleton, with only three troops of the old —th, had broken the back of the uprising, and had put more than half of Cochise's fighting force out of commission.

As the tide of battle swept past, Old Rogers stood alone in the doorway of the adobe building, leaning heavily on his splintered weapon; his giant strength seemed spent, and his brow was very pale as he looked down the long room.

At the further end, behind a hastily constructed barricade of tables and other furniture, was huddled a cowering, terror-stricken lot of women and children. Before the barricade, in her hands a rifle taken from a dead trooper lying near, stood a young woman. Horror was written large on her face, yet every line of her attitude told of

courage and desperate resolve to sell her life dearly.

“Have they gone?” she asked of Rogers. He nodded silently. The gun slipped from her grasp and clattered to the floor as she covered her face with her hands and sank helplessly against the barricade. From the inner corner, where the barrier was highest, came a quavering scream: “What is it, Winifred? Are we safe?” Then, followed by a dozen weeping females, the Colonel’s wife, a large, heavy-featured woman, made a tearful rush to Rogers. “Oh, sir,” she cried, wringing her hands in a delirium of fright, “are we really saved? Have the troops driven them off? God will reward you, sir, and those brave men who fought with you for our deliverance!”

Beside herself with excitement and the joy of un hoped for salvation, Mrs. Trenholm ran back and half dragged the girl to the door. “Winifred!” she said, shaking the young woman hysterically, “you must thank this brave soldier for saving our lives.”

“But, madam, I am not a soldier,” interposed Old Rogers.

“Not a soldier?” she inquired, in surprise. “Well, anyway, you fought for us, and from the innermost depths of our hearts we thank you. My husband, the colonel commanding, will reward you

in a suitable manner. We want to show our gratitude, and you will allow us to reward you, will you not?"

There was a strange light in the prospector's eyes, as he slowly responded: "Madam, you overwhelm me; but if you really desire to reward my service, you might allow me to kiss that young lady."

"What!" she fairly shrieked. "How dare you offer such an impertinence? Who are you?"

"My name is Rogers," answered the man.

"Ah! So you are the wretch who sent those insolent messages to my husband, and now you take advantage of our gratitude to offer an indignity to the ladies of his household!"

"Pardon me if I correct your statement, madam; you should not use the plural term; I mentioned only one lady."

Mrs. Trenholm was no longer the terrified, grateful woman. She had found herself, and was once more the Colonel's wife, the first lady of the regiment. Recent benefits were promptly forgotten as she glared at him, a living monument of outraged dignity.

"You contemptible vagabond!" she snapped; "My husband will pay you for your service, if you have really rendered one, which I now doubt, and then he will have you whipped out of camp."

With apparent effort the old man made reply. His eyes stared vacantly past the two women, as if gazing beyond them through some dim vista of the past, and his words came slowly, haltingly, as he muttered to himself: "It is fitting; it is just. The years surrender nothing of their toll."

Recovering himself, his eyes lingered for a time upon the white face of the girl, then, bowing courteously, he turned to the door, wavered for an instant, and fell prostrate.

Singleton, who had ridden back, was instantly by his side; but, before he could speak, Mrs. Trenholm was pouring forth her tale: "Captain Singleton, that man has grossly insulted us, and I want him locked up."

The Captain's face expressed his concern for the miner, as well as his astonishment at the charge. "Rogers insulted you? Why? How? What has he done, Mrs. Trenholm?"

"He wanted to be rewarded for his service by being permitted to—to kiss Winifred."

In blank amazement the Captain answered: "I can't believe that he meant any disrespect, though I confess that his request was a strange one." Thus speaking, he gently lifted and eased the limp figure. As he did so, his eye caught the dull red stain slowly spreading from beneath the cartridge belt, low down on the right side. "He

is shot," he said simply; then he burst out, "Do you know that you all owe your lives to this man? To him alone belongs all the credit of the rescue. He it was who spurred us on and guided us to the attack, and it was his splendid fight here at the door which prevented a butchery. Mrs. Trenholm, it ill becomes you to prefer charges against a man who has risked, and perhaps sacrificed, his life in your behalf."

"But—but—he wanted to kiss Winifred," stammered the Colonel's wife, dismayed at this turn of events.

"Well, what of it!" answered the Captain, bluntly. "He is a lonely old man, living in the hills, and probably has not seen a girl in years. He is a gentleman, I'll gamble on that, and I don't believe he meant to insult anybody." Then he added brusquely: "I'll ask you people to vacate this room now, I must have it for the wounded. Here, men! help me get Mr. Rogers inside and fix a bed for him."

Some one touched his arm. It was Miss Winifred. "Captain, let me help in caring for him. I don't believe a word against him. I was peeping through the loop holes when his horse went down, and I saw it all. No man who fights like that ever insults women. Do you think he is badly hurt, Captain?"

There was in the girl's words and manner, as she put the question, something which touched Singleton's generous nature. "Bless your heart, Miss Winnie! I'm glad to hear you say that. If all the women in the world were as big-souled, and could read human nature as you seem to have done, there wouldn't be many misunderstandings. Can't tell yet about his wound, except that he is shot through the body and is unconscious. That looks bad, but we may pull him through. Please get a cot in readiness, and the surgeon will examine him at once."

Within an hour order had come out of chaos. Fires were extinguished, the wounded brought in, and the women made comfortable in the half consumed structures. Night came on and all was silent about the little garrison, save the heavy tread of the sentries or the occasional whinny of a tired troop horse calling the master who would never come.

Inside the roofless walls of a barrack room lay a long row of blanket-covered figures, whose ears would not again catch the blithe notes of the reveille, whose pulses would never more quicken in the glorious madness of the charge. Their work was finished and ere another sunset, in unmarked graves, they would be sleeping the long

sleep, their only requiem the soft whispering of the desert winds.

In the make-shift hospital the surgeon was busy with his gruesome task. Old Rogers, still unconscious, had received only a hasty examination. Presently the surgeon came again to him and probed deep the blue-black wound in the old man's side. "It's no use," he said to Singleton; "I can't help him."

"Will he die?" whispered the Captain. The surgeon nodded silently.

To the surprise of both the wounded man opened his eyes and calmly inquired, "How long can I live, Doctor?"

"I can't say, Mr. Rogers," responded the surgeon, gravely; "it may be twenty-four hours; possibly a little more, but I fear I can't promise you—"

Old Rogers interrupted him: "All right, Doctor; I've got twenty-four hours, and that means a night and a day. I don't ask for more. I'll live till the sun goes down tomorrow, then I'll go. Don't bother with me," he added, "but take care of those lads whom you can help."

As the surgeon moved away the miner extended his hand to Singleton. "I congratulate you, Captain," he said, cheerfully; "you won your promotion today, and I'm glad. Cochise's band will

not trouble you again for awhile, I'm thinking. Bully fight, wasn't it?"

The soldier's eyes were misty and his voice broke as he gripped the hand. "Don't," he said, huskily; "it isn't fair. If there's any glory comes out of this affair, it belongs to you. You planned the attack and led us here; I merely carried out your suggestions, and you may be sure that it will be so reported to the colonel commanding."

"That's generous," replied the wounded man; "but leave me out of it, my friend. For nearly twenty years I have shunned publicity, and I'm not seeking it now. You are a good sort, Singleton, and a fighter, and I love you for it; but please don't mention me in your dispatches."

Singleton tried to speak, but found no words, as he gripped the big hand more closely. For a long time they were silent, the subtle freemasonry between two gallant souls making speech unnecessary. In the long room all was still, save the stertorous breathing or the occasional groan of a wounded trooper. Outside, the pale radiance of the moonlight cast ghostly shadows over the torn and trampled parade, and stars shone unheedingly over the spot where men had struggled and fought and died in the hot lust of battle. From the nearby hills came the dismal howl of the coyote, as he scented the blood taint on the sweet

night air, while the distant peaks, faint silhouettes in the gloom, kept grim, impassive sentinel.

Finally the old man spoke again: "Captain," he said, "will you do something for me?"

"Anything; anything in my power, Mr. Rogers. What is it?"

"Find some corner in one of the buildings where we may be alone, and have me carried there. I have something I want to say to you."

"I will arrange it at once," said Singleton, as he left the room. He soon returned with four troopers, who carefully lifted the cot to convey the miner into another chamber, which had been hastily cleared. As they passed out of the door, Miss Winifred came hastily to the Captain's side. "Is he—dead?" she faltered.

Old Rogers' quick ear had caught the whispered question, and instantly came his reply. "Not yet; not yet, little girl. The doctor promises me twenty-four hours. Captain Singleton and I have some business together tonight, but might I ask you to come to me in the morning? You will come?" There was an agony of pleading in the simple words.

"Yes—yes—I—will come," cried the weeping girl, as she knelt beside the cot. "Surely I will come, Mr. Rogers. I wanted to see you, to beg your forgiveness for the horrid, cruel words which

were flung at you. She didn't understand; she is very sorry."

The big, rough hand had rested for an instant on the bowed head, and the gray face was very tender in the moonlight, as he said: "No, she didn't understand; but you and I understand, and I thank God for it. You must sleep now, and in the morning we will talk further." Then the bearers moved on.

When they were alone, Rogers turned his eyes once more to his companion's face, and thus addressed him:

"Singleton, till a few hours since we were utter strangers, but in those few hours we have lived a wide span, as human experience is measured, for we have trod the wine press together and I feel that a friendship has been born to us. To that friendship I now appeal, and ask you to listen to a story; the story of a man who has but a little time to live, and must needs speak quickly. Will you hear me and will you keep my trust?"

"I am your friend, and so help me God, I will keep the trust," answered the Captain.

And, there by the flickering light of an army lantern, in the half-burned ruins of the mess room at old Fort Bolton, the tale of the stricken man was told.

"I must go a long way back for a starting

point," he began; "back to 1864 and the days of the rebellion, when I was forty years of age, and a captain in the 1st Maine, the greatest cavalry regiment that ever followed the colors. It was no idle statement when I told you today that I had seen service. My brother was also in the army, a brevet major of another regiment.

"It was during the last year of the war and the hard service of the summer, together with the malaria which I had contracted in the southern climate, unfitted me for duty, and I was invalided home. Before I was again fit, the war ended and I passed out of military life.

"When I returned to the north I chose as a place to recuperate, the north woods of the Adirondacks, settling myself at a resort easily reached from Albany. Though the summer season was past, a number of guests still lingered through the cool crisp days of autumn, and among them I met Her, the girl who was to become my wife. I loved her from the first hour, and since that hour no other woman has been aught to me. She was gentle and loving and proud, possessing the perplexities of character which men of action admire in women. Orphaned at an early age, her home was with an old uncle, a northern man who had resided near Richmond, Va., and whose estate had been confiscated by reason of his

loyalty to the flag. I was a soldier, a hero, in her eyes, and soon she loved me. She was too womanly a woman to keep me long in suspense, so within a few weeks we went, hand in hand, for the uncle's blessing.

“During the winter health and strength returned to me, and one glorious morning in June we stood before the altar to exchange the vows which made her my wife. Every day of my wretched, lonely life that scene has been before me; even now, Singleton, I see it all. In the subdued light which filtered through the stained and sculptured windows, in the solemn hush of Old Trinity, I uttered the words which bound me to her for life, and gladly promised to shield, and love and honor her till death us should part. Oh, God! Why did I fail! Why did I fail!”

A great sob burst from the old miner, as he paused in his tale. Presently he resumed:

“We were very happy. I settled in New York and took up the law, which had been my profession before entering the army. The world went well with us then, and life was one splendid anthem of full content. A blissful year sped past, then came a brown-eyed baby girl, bringing to us the strange new joy of parenthood. My cup was full, and never since the world began was man more blest than I.

“The little one had been with us nearly a year when, as some baseless vision, my heaven vanished and the hell of black despair was mine. In one brief hour of unreasoning jealous rage I wrecked the sacred structure of love and home, to be evermore an outcast, shunning the haunts of men.

“For several days I had noticed that my wife appeared unusually silent and preoccupied, but gave it little heed. One evening I arrived from the office rather earlier than usual, and passing through the upper hall, went at once to the nursery, as was my custom. As I passed the door of her room I was halted by the sound of voices from within. One, a man’s voice, was raised in protest against something to which my wife seemed urging him. Surprised, I hesitated for a moment; then noiselessly descended to the library to await the end of the interview.

“Presently they came down the stairway, still conversing in low tones, and passed the library to the outer entrance; but as the heavy curtains were close drawn, I remained silent and unseen. Then I heard the faintly murmured words, ‘Good-bye, dear. Come tomorrow at four.’ A kiss, and he was gone, she again ascending the stairs.

“I was utterly stunned, but had wit enough to slip to the window to watch a young and hand-

some man turn away from my steps and walk quickly away. Then I sank on the window seat in an effort to collect my senses. My wife, my Marie, kissing another man, a stranger to me! Impossible! Yet I had heard it, and had seen him. Then reason returned and I laughed aloud at my foolish excitement. It was some relative from afar, or some girlhood friend. What a brute I was to question, even for a moment, any action of that pure-souled creature, the mother of my child. Faugh! how I hated myself for the momentary doubt. She would tell me all about it at dinner; yes, surely.

“Waiting half an hour, till my agitation had subsided, I again went upstairs, to be met at the nursery door with her usual loving greeting. For a time I played with the little one, waiting for some word of explanation; but no word came, and I saw traces of recent tears on her face. Again the doubts assailed me, but resolutely I thrust them back. She would surely tell me at dinner or during our evening chat in the library. But the evening waned and yet no word of explanation. She made a feeble attempt at cheerfulness, but appeared ill at ease and yet more preoccupied. At nine o’clock she pleaded fatigue and begged me to excuse her. Then she went to her room, with no mention of the thing which

was uppermost in my mind. Then was borne in upon me the ugly fact that my wife was concealing from me the visit in her private apartments of a man, a stranger to her husband. And he had kissed her! Again the doubts crept into my troubled soul, multiplying as they came. Again and again I took the stand in her defense, bringing reason to labor in her behalf; but it was useless. The more I reasoned, the blacker appeared her action. Her only brother had died in a rebel prison and she was without near relative. What man, then, had she the right to kiss? Was he some former lover returning to her favor? The thought maddened me, and I sprang up to pace the floor in a tempest of jealous fury. Twice I started to her room, to force from her then and there a confession of her vileness, or some explanation which would end my torture, but I could not bring myself to do it.

“For hours I paced, wrestling with myself, striving to excuse or palliate her action; but as I remembered her evident agitation, her failure to tell me, her husband, aught of the man’s visit or her relations with him, the doubts gave way to full conviction of her guilt. But I would be sure. She had bade him come again on the morrow, and I, also, would be there. I would know.

“With this resolve I went to my room, to toss through the remaining hours of the night.

“At breakfast she appeared in a happier mood and solicitously remarked my haggard appearance. I had regained my composure and laughingly explained that I had worked rather late the previous night over the details of a difficult case I had in hand. Then I made a test. I had been telling her of a picture in a downtown gallery which I greatly admired and now proposed that she come to my office at four o’clock, when we would together visit the gallery, after which we would dine at her favorite restaurant and spend the evening at some theater. It was just such an evening as she loved, and only matters of great importance would cause here to forego it.

“Instantly her face clouded and she hastened to explain that household duties would prevent her going that evening, but would be delighted to accompany me the following afternoon. I urged the original plan, and inquired what particular household affair would engage her that afternoon. She made some evasive excuse; then rising, came to me and, putting her arm about my shoulder, she went on: ‘I can’t go today, dear; I really can’t. Put it off till tomorrow, to please me. You look ill and worried this morning. Is that stupid case

still bothering you? Why do you look at me so strangely?’

“I assured her that the tangles had all disappeared and that I now saw the case quite clearly. Even then I loved her, as I kissed her good-bye, though I felt that the other man had won and went out of my home with black rage gnawing at my heart. At four o’clock that other man was to come, and I, her husband, the blind fool, must needs be hoodwinked with flimsy excuses. But I would be there; ah, yes, I would be there. I would watch and listen, and if suspicion ripened into certainty, I would kill them both and so make an end to it. A deadly calm possessed me during that awful day. Methodically I went about putting my affairs in order, as if for a journey, though why I did so I could not have told. Slowly the interminable day dragged by till the fateful hour arrived, and I started up town. Reaching the street I walked very quietly to my door and noiselessly turned the key. In the half light of the lower hall I paused for a few moments, listening. From the upper floor came the murmur of voices and the low laugh of a man. Passing on through the dining room, I proceeded to the kitchen, for I wanted no prying servants to balk my vengeance. Then I remembered that on this afternoon the servants would

be out. She was alone in the house with that man!

“Stealthily I tiptoed up the stairs and crept along the hall to the nursery, from whence the murmur of voices came. The door was ajar, and through the narrow slit at the hinges I peered in. As I looked, the blind fury and jealous hate which I had all day held in leash, surged through me once more. He stood in the center of the room, his arm about my wife, her head leaning lovingly upon his shoulder. They were looking at a small photograph and he was saying: ‘Yes, dear, I have carried your picture every day since we were separated.’ Laughing happily, she said, ‘Such love deserves reward,’ and, drawing his face down, she kissed him on the lips. ‘Come,’ she said, ‘I want you to see baby. Isn’t she lovely? I really believe she resembles you.’

“‘That’s flattering,’ he answered lightly, as he bent over the little one.

“As they turned away from the child her face took on the uneasy, troubled look it had worn the evening before and her arms went about his neck. ‘Oh, how I wish I could have you here with me always. But I am afraid for you. My husband—’

“The sentence was never finished. Like a wild beast I was upon them. Startled, he was in the act of turning to face me, when my blow struck

him full on the temple and he fell like a log. With a cry of alarm and horror my wife attempted to stay my arm, to speak, but I flung her fiercely aside, her head striking violently against the table as she fell. Again I was upon him. I had no thought of weapons; I only wanted to get my hands upon his throat. With my bare hands I killed him; strangling, crushing, beating his life out. When it was done, I turned to complete my vengeance upon her. Like a broken flower she lay where I had flung her, white and still in unconsciousness. It was not in me to further lift my hand against her, for I loved her; God pity me, I still loved her.

“As in a dream I left the house and made my way to the railway station. I wanted to be away, far away from the home and the woman I had so loved; to put it all behind me; to forget.

“Bear with me, my friend, and forgive having inflicted upon you these frightful and tedious details. I am not trying to justify the hideous deed; I am only trying to explain my mental attitude and the awful strain which led me to it. Having heard me thus far, do you think my action was so very different from what yours would have been, if placed under like conditions? Would you have done it, Singleton?”

Both horror and compassion were in the Cap-

tain's face, as he hastened to answer:

"I don't know; I don't know, Mr. Rogers. Don't ask me. Go on."

For a time the old man was silent, but his labored breathing and the great beads of sweat upon his brow told of his anguish. Then once more he took up the tale.

"Of the next few weeks I know but little. I only remember that I wanted to go on and on, to get further away from it. By railway and stage coach, and finally on foot, I penetrated into the wilderness of the southwest frontier. Texas and the Mexican border were the refuge of the riffraff of the armies and I found myself among strange companions; men who asked no questions, gave no information, all of which was to my liking. After a time I gradually awoke from the lethargy, only to find that vengeance is not sweet. I do not recall that I felt any remorse at that time, only the dull pain of one whose life's hopes had been blotted out. It seemed to me that I had suffered all there was to suffer, and that nothing could much matter. How little did I realize the uttermost depths to which my soul must yet descend in its torture.

"I was well provided with funds, and wandered aimlessly from place to place in that wild country. I began to crave excitement and spent long nights

at the gaming table, where I became proverbially lucky.

“The Union Pacific was building its long stretch to the westward and, tiring of Texas, I turned to the north, where I was soon risking and again winning large sums across the green cloth in Cheyenne. Then came the thunderbolt which well nigh deprived me of reason and left me a physical wreck as well.

“My room was in one of the flimsy wooden hotels, and the cheap wooden partitions made it quite possible to overhear conversation in adjoining apartments. After a night at the tables, I was awakened late one morning by voices in the next room. Two men were talking and I listlessly learned that one, who had been absent from the east for some time, was hearing from the other, a recent arrival, items of news and gossip concerning mutual acquaintances. Suddenly I heard my own name mentioned; then, paralyzed with horror and remorse, I heard the details of my crime and supposed suicide. I had been seen hurriedly leaving my home, and later the servants had found my wife lying insensible beside a dead man in her apartment. It was not till the following day that she regained consciousness and was able to make her statement to the coroner. The dead man was her brother, whom she had

supposed dead. He had, however, survived months of prison life and a long illness which followed. After Appomattox he had returned to his home but found no trace of his people, whose possessions had been swept away in the red tide of war. After this he had followed the sea for a time, but more recently had been engaged in some questionable enterprises involving a charge of smuggling, had been captured, and was now under bonds awaiting his trial. Learning, by merest chance, of his sister's whereabouts, he had come to visit her. He was sanguine of escaping the penalty of the law and wanted to meet her husband and ask his advice. However, her pride of family had rebelled at this and she urged him to go away till his name was clear, and had concealed from her husband her brother's visits. Her husband had surprised them together and had wantonly murdered the young man, and had struck her down in the room where lay his sleeping child. She had tried to explain, but he seemed insane and would not listen. She could tell no more and returned to her bed, from which she never arose. She had died a few weeks later, a broken-hearted woman. The little child had been adopted by the husband's brother. It was believed that the crime was induced by the man's insane jealousy of a supposed rival, after which

he had committed suicide, as his hat had been found in the river.

“Carelessly the voice in the next room went on, little knowing that each sentence was driving the iron of unspeakable remorse and despair deeper into my soul. I tried to speak, to call out to him that I, the murderer, was there; but no words came forth. Then something snapped in my brain and all was blackness.”

Again Old Rogers paused, his voice broken, the veins on his forehead standing out rigid and swollen, while his face worked in a paroxysm of suffering. “Water,” he muttered. Singleton gave him water, then waited silently.

“It was weeks later,” resumed the wounded man, “that I came to my senses in a tent hospital to which I had been conveyed. Men looked askance at me, for in my delirium I had raved of murder and a dead wife. Why I recovered I know not, for I had no wish to live; yet life clung to me and in a month more I left the place, a weak and tottering old man. My hair and beard were as white as they are today. I went once more to the southwest, but no longer to live the life of a gambler, seeking forgetfulness in play. Henceforth I shunned men and hid myself away in the fastnesses along the frontier. Slowly health and strength returned but never for a moment

did I escape that dread burden of impotent remorse. I would have killed myself, but had not the courage; so I lived on with those two dead ones ever at my table.

“I wrote my brother a letter, in which I asked for tidings of my child. I tried to tell him how it had all come about; explained the fatal chain of circumstances which had temporarily unbalanced my reason and led me to commit the crime for which I felt there was no atonement. I begged for his love, his forgiveness, his prayers; poured out my very soul to him in appeal for some word, some token that he still remembered me as his brother. No message came in response and I accepted the unwritten mandate. I was an outcast, disclaimed by family, accursed of men. Oh! Singleton, you don’t know the agony of feeling that there is no human soul to whom you may turn, no one to lighten a punishment which is greater than one can bear.

“Fully recovered in health, I returned for a time to the settlements and served for a year with the Rangers, sought every post of danger in the desperate affairs along the border, courted death a hundred times, but came through unscathed while better men died. Then I sickened of hunting criminals, I, the greatest criminal of all. My troubled soul yearned more than before for the

quiet of wide solitudes, for the restful silence of the hill country; so I pushed on to the westward till I reached the broken wastes of Arizona. I sought the hills beyond the Gila, where I was told no white man had ever secured a foothold. I was warned that I would be killed by the Apaches, but was not hindered by the warning. What mattered the danger? I wanted a refuge in the wilderness and, if need be, I would fight the sons of Ishmael for it. Fighting was better than thinking; so I welcomed the possibilities.

“The first year was one of continual warfare and I was obliged to live the life of a nomad, moving constantly from place to place to avoid the ambush which was daily spread for me. With me were a Mexican boy and a Canadian half-breed, lured by love of adventure and the large wages I offered; but first one, then the other was killed by my watchful and implacable neighbors, upon whose hunting grounds I had trespassed. I was alone. It was while seeking a new hiding place, after a particularly narrow escape, that I happened upon the cave which is now known as Rogers’ Mine. As it had an abundance of good water and was admirably fitted for defense, I resolved to make it my home and to fight it out with my dusky enemies. This resolve was strengthened

when I discovered the outcrop of a copper vein in the walls of the cavern.

“That night, under cover of a fierce thunder storm, I slipped away and made good my escape to the settlements and from there to Tucson, where I laid in supplies for a year, including a large quantity of blasting powder, fire arms and ammunition, as well as some chemicals and dry batteries. Hiring an adequate escort to safeguard the journey I returned to the hills and once more took up my lonely existence. Within a week I was raided; but this time my red friends found me fairly well prepared for their coming.

“Well within the cave, and barely discernible from the entrance, I had rigged up a dummy figure, topped with one of my old hats, and so arranged that the slightest touch would topple it over. To it was attached a wire which led to an alarm bell above my bunk in a side passage farther in.

“At daybreak one morning I was awakened by shots and the immediate tinkling of my bell. The Apaches had sneaked up to the entrance and perforated the dummy with a half dozen bullets. As it went down they swarmed, yelling, inside, anticipating no resistance from the sole occupant whom they had gunned so successfully. Slipping into a side niche, from which I could command a

view while remaining completely hidden, I proceeded to entertain my benighted brethren with sundry and divers manifestations which scared the dirty rascals almost out of their wits. In my younger days I had learned ventriloquism and I now brought it into play. From the roof of the cavern, the gloomy depths of the side passages, or from the stony floor, came ghastly groans and shrieks, then wild bursts of demoniacal laughter and taunting words in their own language, a little of which I had picked up. Then, by pressing a few buttons and pounding vigorously upon a long piece of sheet iron, I gave them thunder and lightning with a vengeance behind it. They fairly screeched with terror and fought like wildcats among themselves in the frantic effort of each to be first outside. For the first time in three years I laughed, actually laughed aloud, as they tumbled over each other in their mad rush for the entrance.

“They left me in peace for a time but, as I afterwards learned, the members of this party had been taunted with cowardice by the old chiefs; so a few weeks later a larger band surrounded my cave in the mountains and prepared to smoke me out by siege. But I lay close and could have remained hidden for a month, if neces-

sary. So they tired of this plan, after a few days of useless watching.

"I knew that sooner or later they would storm my little stronghold and determined that I would teach them a lesson that should last a lifetime. In the floor of the cavern I arranged a half dozen mines, at intervals of ten feet, which I could explode at will from my place of concealment.

"Again at daybreak they rushed the entrance, and fifty or more of them came pell mell down the main chamber. Waiting till they had reached the innermost of my mines I let off a few dismal howls and began exploding my fireworks, which literally blew them out of the cave. Twelve were killed outright, while several more were badly injured but managed to crawl away.

"Among the dead I found a young brave, a mere boy, who had been stunned but otherwise was unhurt by the explosion. Him I chained to the rocks in a narrow gallery, then tumbled the dead over the cliff to serve as an object lesson. The boy proved to be the grandson of Chief Cochise, the old devil who planned the raid which came so nearly wiping out this post today." Old Rogers smiled grimly, as he continued: "For a month I made that youngster's life one long nightmare. By the use of ventriloquism and a few simple electrical displays I kept him in a

state of continual funk, occasionally varying the programme by smearing my person with phosphorus and appearing suddenly before him. All these tricks I played at night when the cave was as dark as a pocket. In the day-time I treated him kindly and fed him well, though he ate little and would soon have died from sheer terror. Having thoroughly impressed him with the belief that I was in league with the evil one, and that the spirits of darkness were at my command, I one night took him to the entrance and set him free; first making him understand that, if I was again molested, I would descend upon them and destroy the entire Apache people. From that day to this they have given me a wide berth, and nothing on earth would induce an Apache to venture within a mile of Rogers' mine.

“I have told you these incidents, Captain, that you might understand how I was able to make my home for so many years alone in the heart of a hostile country. It is thus I have lived, alone with my thoughts, simply waiting for the finish; and now that it is near I am not sorry, for it has been a dreary wait. As the years went on time blunted somewhat the keenness of my anguish; but daily, hourly, remorse has gnawed at my heartstrings and I have been the most miserable, most unhappy of men. Far inside the winding passages

of my cave I hewed in the living rock a vaulted chamber, and in it a shrine to Her, my beloved, who died through my insane act. You will find it there, and when you have lighted the candles which you will find upon the altar, you may see the sanctuary where I have spent many hours. There I uncovered the innermost depths of my being and prayed my Maker for surcease of pain; prayed to Her and the dead kinsman that they would forgive. In the silent watches of the night from my couch I have stretched forth my arms to Her in the anguished cry 'forgive, forgive,' and the rocky walls of my dwelling place echoed back the haunting words 'forgive.' Now I am an old and broken man, hurt unto death."

Old Rogers searched the officer's face, and a great sob shook the massive frame, as he concluded:

"You have heard my story, Captain. Having heard it, do you find it in your heart to take my hand and speak some word which shall assure me that the friendship born in the turmoil and stress of battle still survives this confession? Some word which shall cheer me on my way as I pass through the Valley of the Shadow?"

Singleton, his eyes swimming with tears, arose and leaning over the couch, placed his arm about the old man's shoulders. "Poor old chap," he

said softly; "poor, brave, old chap! You have had more than your share. Grievously as you have sinned, surely you have atoned. Here is my hand. I am proud to call you my friend, and I honor you as a brave man, guilty of a great and fatal mistake, rather than an awful crime, as you have seen fit to picture it."

The wounded man clung to him as to a last hope and his voice was still thick with emotion as he said: "God will reward you for those words, Singleton. The words of that young lady, an hour ago, and your own, are the only expressions of human interest or human sympathy which have come to me in nearly a score of years, and they have opened the springs which I fancied were seared and sealed forever. Sit down again, Captain, and let me finish the little more I have to say tonight."

Singleton again gave him to drink and, as he seated himself Old Rogers resumed.

"As you may imagine, a man of my physical energy could not have remained idle during the long sojourn in the hills. On the contrary, I worked as few men have worked; it was the safest and sanest thing I could have done. The vein of copper which I discovered has proved to be of great value, and I spent the years in delving for its riches. In four of the larger chambers, far back

in the inner recesses of the cave, you will find stored several thousand tons of selected ore, almost pure copper. It is worth a fortune, and should be taken away under a proper guard. I had little need of money, so I went on year after year piling it up. If this country is ever made secure from Indian depredation, Rogers' mine may be placed among the world's great producers; but, in any event, there is now lying stored there enough riches to satisfy most men. Miss Winifred and yourself are the two persons on earth who have let the sunlight into my soul, and it is my desire that you and she share equally the legacy I now put into your keeping. Please execute a paper to that effect and I will sign it in the morning, though this formality is perhaps unnecessary, as no one will dispute your claim. No! No!" he said, silencing the protest which Singleton was about to make; "I know my mind and will not be balked in this, the last request I shall ask at the hands of man."

"But your brother, Mr. Rogers, and your other relatives, your child? Do you not consider them? Are they not living? Do you not desire that I should convey some tidings to them? And, surely, they are more entitled to this fortune than the Colonel's daughter and myself, mere strangers."

The old man frowned slightly and his voice took

on added strength and solemnity, as he replied: "You have said that you were my friend, and I have your assurance that you will execute my trust. You have heard my wishes. Let it be so. There is but one more thing I have to ask of you. There is one man in the world to whom I should like to have you tell my story, word for word as you have heard it tonight; but to no other living person. Remember that. You will not seek him; if one comes to you and asks for the story, you may safely tell him, for it will be the right man. If such an one does not come, you will hold my secret and the unhappy tale will be buried with me. I am exhausted now, my friend, and must rest."

Through the long night Singleton watched with the stricken man, who lay silently staring up at the smoke-stained rafters of the old mess room. Occasionally he asked for water, or again urged the Captain to seek some rest; but aside from this, all was silent. Did he in those still hours live over and over again the tragedy of his life, or was his soul seeking to penetrate the mystery which lay beyond the unseen portals through which it was soon to pass? Who shall say?

With the dawn the garrison was astir and the surgeon came to see the wounded miner. The old man greeted him cheerfully and complained of no

discomfort save the numbness which was slowly creeping over him. He asked that a barber might serve him, and a trooper who had some skill with the razor gladly volunteered. The old man directed that his hair and mustache be carefully trimmed and brushed, but that the long beard be entirely removed. The transformation was complete and startling. Singleton, whose duties had called him away for an hour, was amazed at Old Rogers' changed appearance. The features, no longer concealed by the shaggy beard, bore the unmistakable stamp of birth and breeding; and though deep lines told of mental travail, it was the cameo-cut, æsthetic face of the student or jurist, transfigured and softened and dignified by the Great Translator whose finger had touched him.

"Singleton," he said, when the others had gone; "Sergeant Kennedy has been to my place, and I would ask that you send him there upon an errand. Provide him with a torch or lantern, for he could not manipulate my lights. In the fourth chamber on the right from the entrance he will find an old portmanteau. It contains linen and other clothing which I desire. Let him proceed quickly and bring it here. In the meantime I wish you would have a couple of men bathe me. I have a reason for it, and you will humor the whim of

a dying man. I have lived like an outcast, but I would die like a gentleman.”

Two hours later Kennedy had returned, and then they tenderly dressed him in the yellowed linen and the ancient, though carefully preserved broadcloth, and it was a gentleman of the old school who lay smiling at them from the army cot. “Now,” he said, “I am ready to receive lady callers. Please ask Miss Trenholm to come to me.”

Winifred, apparently calm but very pale, came to the bedside and, instantly noting his changed appearance, shrank back in some hesitation, but his kindly greeting at once relieved the situation.

“The grizzled old miner is gone,” he explained, “but your friend Rogers remains. It is very good of you to come. Sit here beside me and tell me something of yourself. It has been many years since I talked to a young lady.—No! No!” he interrupted; “Don’t thank me; I only did what any man would have done. Tell me about yourself.”

Then the girl told him of her life at the army posts, her days at the academy, and of her little social triumphs and disappointments. In a few minutes she found herself talking as freely and frankly to this gray-haired man as if she had known him all her life. Now and again she

faltered and wept a little, as rose before her the awful peril she had escaped through his intervention and the thought that in a few hours this new-found friend would pass from her forever; but each time he gently led her back to talk of her own affairs. He asked what manner of man her father was and if she had a comrade in him. Her face fell a bit as she told him of her parents. Her father, she said, was an austere though kindly man, who loved her tenderly; but she confessed she had never broken through his natural reserve and had never felt free to carry her girlish troubles to him. In fact, she was in much the same position with her mother; but added that they were both pure gold and declared that she loved them very dearly.

When she had told him all the little confidences which a girl gives to a friend she trusts, he told her something of his own life. He had once had a little girl, he said; a tiny, baby girl with wonderful brown eyes; but when she was one year of age a great trouble had come into his life, a tragedy which had forced him to leave his home and he had never seen her again. Then he told her of the beautiful, sweet-faced wife, whom he had also left behind. "But didn't you love her?" interrupted the girl. "If you loved her, surely, you would have gone back."

She never forgot the agony upon his face and in his voice, as he answered brokenly: "Aye, little girl, never did man love woman more; but she died soon afterward and I never went back. I never saw either of them again."

Awed by his evident suffering and the strange yearning in his eyes, she was silent for a time, though all the womanly sympathy of her nature went out to him. She did not speak, but her hand sought his and tenderly stroked it. Twice the old man moved, as if to speak of something very near his heart, but each time he hesitated and seemed to force back the words. Presently he grew calmer. "This is most trying for you, little one, but your sympathy is sweet and you have made an old man very happy. You must go now, but you will come again an hour before the sunset to say good-bye?" Weeping softly, the girl went away.

Gradually Old Rogers' iron strength was waning and he was noticeably weaker when Singleton again joined him. He spoke of Miss Winifred's visit and the great solace he had had in coming in touch with so beautiful a character. "She is as pure and sweet as a flower," he said; then added eagerly, "she is coming again to see me before I go."

Again he instructed his friend as to the dispo-

sition of the treasure at the mine, and made some suggestions as to safeguarding Miss Trenholm's share by investment. These matters finally adjusted, a great peace seemed to descend upon him and he spoke cheerfully upon many topics. Looking in upon him as he lay there smiling so tranquilly, one could scarce have imagined the end so near. Singleton was amazed at the breadth and scope of Old Rogers' mental attainments, as he heard him touch familiarly upon this or that philosophy in its bearing upon human affairs, or listened to his quotations from the world's best literature. The Captain was embarrassed for a ready answer when Rogers suddenly asked him to name his favorite author and his best loved poem. After some little discussion upon the works named, the old man expressed his own choice,—Gray's *Elegy*. "It is the greatest aggregation of words in the English language," he declared. "In its rhythmic sentiment is embodied the one philosophy of all the ages, the philosophy of Opportunity. Given an opportunity, Gray's village lad might well have been a Cæsar, rather than the mute, inglorious Milton that he was. "And, do you remember how Gray makes you enter into the spirit of his thought, how he causes you to feel and see with him? Do you recall the first two lines of the second quatrain?

'Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds.'

"That is an exquisite touch, Singleton. A thousand evenings I have stood on the ledge outside my cave on the mountain and whispered these lines as I watched my hill world slowly fade into the purple shadows of the night, and felt the solemn stillness, the reverent hush which fell upon all living things. It was then that some small portion of the great peace seemed to enter into my soul and I have loved the sunset. That is why I wanted to live today till the sun goes down, for I would make my entry into the hereafter during that sacred hour. I have only a little time to wait now, my friend."

Thus tranquilly he lay, as the afternoon wore on, the numbness slowly creeping, creeping, and the pallor of the classic features growing more pronounced as his hour drew near.

At five o'clock Winifred appeared and something he saw in Old Rogers' eyes caused Singleton to leave the young girl alone with the dying man. Coming close beside the cot, she took his hand, then stood silent and sorrowful looking down into his face. What she saw there is not recorded, but it was something she had never before seen on human face, would not see again. Some compelling force drew her down, and she kissed him ten-

derly, reverently, then the well springs of her sorrow burst forth afresh, as she slipped her arms about him and pillowed her head upon the old man's breast, sobbing tumultuously. Hungrily, almost fiercely, the old arms closed about her, holding her to the brave heart whose life throbs were faltering. For a time no word was spoken, then the old man gently soothed her. "There, there, little one; dry your tears. Don't make this matter of dying harder for me. I am an old battered hulk and it is time for me to make port. Until yesterday I have for many years regarded death as a boon denied me; but since then—well, if I hadn't been hurt, I might have lived on for a time in—but that's all by now. Suffice to say that my span nears its end, and it is better so. Your life is before you, and smiles, rather than tears, are for the young; so I would not have you weep more for Old Rogers. Your tears and your sympathy have brought me a great joy, my dear,—greater than you can understand; but now I would have you smile, that I may see the promise of future happiness upon your face. A long life lies before you, and I hope it will be a beautiful life, filled with hope and love and peace. Smile, Winifred, then kiss me once more and let it be our good-bye."

Again she kissed him, then gently he disen-

gaged her arms. As she arose, he saw shining at her throat a tiny pendant. "What is it?" he asked, as he half raised himself for closer examination. "I have had it always," she said. "I was only told that it was an heirloom, and that I must never part with it; but I know nothing further of its history."

"Will you let me take it till—for a little time?" he asked. Unfastening the slender chain, she placed it in his hand. Again in his eyes she saw that ineffable look, as he whispered, "Go now, little one. You will remember me?" "Always," she said, and went softly away, weeping in her first sorrow.

When Singleton entered a few minutes later he saw a face transfigured. "She kissed me," said the old man exultantly; "the little girl kissed me." And in his eyes shone a holy joy, transcendant and unspeakable; the joy of a soul illumined. Then he murmured, as to himself, "God is good. The long years have not been in vain."

For a brief time he lay silent, then he resumed: "The sands are nearly run, my friend. Move me nearer the window, for I want to see it all once more."

The western sky was a flaming sea of azure and gold and crimson, shot through with delicate threads of wondrous tender purple. Into this

splendor the Day God was slowly disappearing behind the distant peaks, while the valley, stretching away to the Gila, lay shrouded in the gray brown mystery of the desert.

"How beautiful it is," he whispered, "that region beyond the sunset!"

His eyes turned once more to the Captain. "Take my hand, Singleton, while I thank you again for your kindness to me. Now, let us say our farewells; then leave me, for I would be alone with my thoughts. May your life be long and free from shadows. Farewell, my friend."

With never a word but with a handclasp which spoke from his heart, Captain Singleton left the room, as the old man turned once more to the glory which blazed about the mountain top.

It was thus he passed, and thus they found him an hour later; the dead eyes still gazing into the west and with Winifred's golden pendant clutched tightly in the stiffened fingers.

At noon the next day the Colonel arrived. As he listened to Singleton's recital of the fight, and the strange old man who had so gallantly served them, his conscience troubled him a bit, for he had meant to punish this man. When he heard Winifred's tearful and agitated tale and learned how her heart had gone out to the stranger, he expressed a desire to see the dead man's face.

Singleton accompanied him to the room and reverently took aside the blanket pall which covered the body. Colonel Trenholm started violently as he looked down upon the noble features of the dead.

"Who is this man? What do you know of him?" he asked of Singleton.

"He was known as Old Rogers," replied the Captain, "and I know of no other name for him."

"But did he tell you nothing of himself? Did he leave no letter? no message?"

"He told me his story under bond of secrecy, and I am to divulge it only to one person."

"And that person?" demanded the Colonel.

"He said that the right man would come to me and ask for the story; then I might speak. Otherwise, his history was to remain forever buried."

"Tell me," pleaded the Colonel, in an agitated voice. "I am the man who has the right to hear."

Word for word, as nearly as he could repeat it, Singleton told Old Rogers' story. When he had finished the Colonel stood again beside the cot and looked long and earnestly at the dead face. "Poor Jack!" he said finally, and his voice shook.

"Did you know him, Colonel?" asked Singleton.

"Yes, I knew him. He was an ex-captain of cavalry, the bravest, best and manliest man I

ever knew, John Rogers Trenholm, my brother. The one wrong thing I ever knew of him was the fearful mistake ending in the tragedy of which you have heard. I had one letter from him, a few years after his disappearance, to which I immediately replied; but my message failed to reach him, as it was returned to me months later. I could find no trace of him in Texas and for years have thought him dead. And now, Captain, do you understand that my brother desired this secret to be shared only between you and myself?"

"I so interpreted his instructions," replied Singleton.

"And no other person is to know?" asked the Colonel meaningly.

"None other," was the Captain's response.

"It is best so," said the Colonel, as he touched his lips to the cold forehead, then covered the dead man's face.

* * * *

Fort Bolton, long since abandoned and well nigh forgotten, is now only a rubbish heap lying stark upon the desolate, windswept plateau; but over it, with the ending of each day, comes the magic gilding of the sunset; the wonder and the glory of the sunset which Old Rogers loved so well.

A DELAYED VERDICT.

The prisoner was a tall, angular fellow, with strong, sharply cut features, and would have been rather good looking had it not been for the long, livid scar, which ran from the corner of one eye across the face to the chin.

No one seemed to know much about him. Where he had come from he had not stated, and it was considered impolite in Arizona to inquire into one's antecedents or former place of residence. He had walked into Nate Salmon's saloon one night, taken his drink, and turned to leave, when Bud hurriedly left his place at the poker game and accosted the man as he was stepping through the doorway. No one heard what passed between the two men, for they spoke in low tones, but all saw the stranger refuse Bud's outstretched hand; nor had they failed to note how white was Bud's face and the pained look in the eyes as he resumed his place at the table.

Bill Letcher, "Windy Bill," who could be depended upon to say the wrong thing at the right time, looked curiously at the white face, then began to palaver. "Who's yer friend, Bud?"

"Feller named Joe Bush," coldly replied Bud, as he flipped a white chip to the center.

"Whar's he from?" persisted Mr. Letcher; but Bud ignored the question, as he engaged with Nate in a battle of red chips for possession of the pot, and lost.

We had just picked up our cards in the next deal when, unwarned by the tense lines about old Bud's mouth, "Windy" took a fresh tack. "Yer friend didn't 'pear to be so whoopin' glad to see ye, did he, Bud? Leastwise, I see him put his hands behind him when yuh offered to shake."

Bud skinned his papers carefully, then, laying them face downward, as if in fear of exposing a big hand, he leaned across the table and, looking clean through Letcher, he said slowly—his words as hard and metallic as the clicking of the main spring when one cocks a shotgun—"you didn't see no such a d——d thing. Your eyesight is gettin' bad, and if you jest keep on seein' things in your mind and then askin' fool questions about 'em, one of these here days you're agoin' to see a funeral persession, and you won't git a bit of dust from it, neither. I passed your shack about a hour ago and your wife was hacking away at the woodpile, rustlin' wood to cook supper. 'Spose you jest lope home and exercise that eyesight of

yourn at choppin'! This here game is a little too crowded with you and me both in it."

There was no mistaking the challenge in look or tone; it meant quit the game or fight, and fighting with Bud McKlintock meant guns at two paces or less, for which Mr. Letcher, formerly of Missouri, had no stomach.

"Why, Bud," he whined, "I didn't mean nothin', I was only——"

Bud pointed to the door. "Lope!" he said. Whereupon Windy stood not upon the order of his going, but loped obediently.

The game dragged on for an hour, but the zest had gone out of it. The air seemed surcharged with trouble, Bud's black looks promising war to any individual seeking that commodity, so we were all relieved when he proposed a round of Jacks to finish the play. We couldn't understand why he had so fiercely resented poor Windy's talk, which, after all, was only talk, yet had meekly accepted a direct insult from the stranger. It couldn't be fear which had stayed him, for we knew Bud from the ground up; knew that he feared nothing which wore hair, be it man, beast or devil. He was usually good natured, but we Seven Bar fellows had seen him in action, and we knew that when riled he would fight a circular saw. He rarely drank, but upon one or two occa-

sions, when away from the home range, he had slipped a cog, and then—well, old Bud rolled 'em high, wide and handsome, lapped up the booze as a hound pup laps pot liquor, till he got sentimental and began to quote poetry. When he began to leak poetry it was time to climb a tree or go to roost behind a good sized rock, for there was sure to be things doing. A couple of years before this he had gone off on a high lonesome while at Nogales, down on the Sonora line; half the town lay in Mexico, the other half in Arizona. After taking aboard the necessary cargo, and buckling on another six-shooter, Bud moseyed down to the stone post which marked the boundary line, got one arm around it, and began to quote poetry to the republic of Mexico. He told 'em how he “stood on the bridge at midnight as the clocks were striking the hour,” etc. That didn't seem to impress them sufficiently, as a derisive voice yelled “Yah!” so he started in with “The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, his cohorts all gleaming,” etc., when he was again interrupted by a “Yah! Yah! Gringo!” That was plenty; Mr. McKlintock, playing a solo hand, promptly invaded Mexico. About fifty feet into the interior he ran against a greaser policeman, who attempted to disarm him and immediately had his face caved in by the butt of one of Bud's

guns, who then took possession of the middle of the street and, with arms extended, a pistol swinging from each trigger finger, he played 'em the "double roll," sending a stream of lead in either direction. After this it was mostly wing shooting, as the Mexican half of Nogales had immediate and urgent business in the brush over the hill. Reloading and emptying his guns a few times, shooting at everything that moved, he finally wandered back to the boundary post, where he regaled the American population by reciting that touching and pathetic ballad, "Home Again From a Foreign Shore."

Oh, no! No sirree! Bud wasn't afraid of this scar-faced stranger; that was a cinch. Then why had he not resented the insult? We learned the whys and wherefores later. The beginning of the unfolding of this story came the following evening.

Again we were seated at the game, and the clicking of chips, as they shifted from one player to another, was the dominant note in the long, low-ceilinged adobe room, in which Nate dispensed hospitality and liquid lightning. Suddenly the stillness of the outer night was rent by the loud bang of a Colt's; then, in rapid succession, another, another, and yet another. Four of them! That many shots surely meant meat, and there

was a concerted rush for the door and down the street a few doors to Juan Baca's greaser joint, the one door of which was now spewing forth a motley, gibbering mob of Mexicans, each intent upon getting beyond the range of a tall figure which stood in the middle of the room, a smoking six-shooter in hand. It was the scar-faced stranger who stood there, while from behind the Monte table, on the hard packed earthen floor, wallowed bestially Pedro Martinez (better known as "Mexican Pete"), gambler, desperado, monte dealer and all round blackleg. As the prostrate figure ceased its struggles we saw emerging from beneath it a reddish black stain, which spread and spread till it reached beyond the table and touched the feet of him who had wrought this sudden undoing of a human being and had, in these few brief seconds, sped a soul to its reckoning.

Turning, the man faced the crowd at the door. "Ef the sheriff is in that bunch, I'll turn this gun over to him," he said quietly, and in the voice there was no tremor of fear nor a scintilla of regret.

Ben Scott, the deputy, stepped into the room, took the pistol, then led the unresisting prisoner through the crowd and over to the jail, which was in one corner of the adobe courthouse just

across the way. As they passed out Bud stepped forward as if to speak, then seemed to think better of it, for he held his peace.

From Juan, who was scared till he was almost white, we heard the story.

Bush, the stranger, had been about the place most of the afternoon and had lost some money to "Mexican Pete" at monte. After supper he had appeared again and, after looking on at the game for a while, during which time he kept a hawklike watch on Pete's hands, he sat in and once more began playing. The Mexican was deftly manipulating the cards in his own interest, when the stranger angrily called him down and they had exchanged sharp words.

It was a low place, frequented almost wholly by Mexicans, and a throng of them now gathered about the monte table to watch the artistic fleecing of the Gringo.

The game went on, with varying fortune to the scar-faced American, until presently, at the end of a deal, Pete's hand hovered for an instant over the deck, as his glance traveled furtively to his opponent's face. Lunging half way across the board, the stranger grabbed the dealer's hand and twisted it savagely upward, thus exposing the palmed card which it held; while with his free hand he reclaimed the last bet he had lost. "You

d——d yaller thief!” he growled, “you can’t steal my bets thataway.”

With an ugly snarl, which showed his yellow, fang-like teeth, the gambler wrenched his hand free and reached back for his gun. But he was too slow.

Bringing himself into an upright position the scar-faced man snatched his triggerless pistol from his hip and fanned four shots into Pete’s body before the latter awoke to the fact that he had been killed.

After hearing the brief details our crowd went to Nate’s, took a drink on the house, and resumed our play. It had been a very lively little row while it lasted, and the stranger had, in a very genteel and gentlemanlike manner, rid the community of a surplus desperado, all of which was most favorably commented upon; but poker was poker, and a dead Mexican more or less didn’t cut much ice in Arizona. “Who’s deal is it? Go on with the game.”

Court convened about two weeks later, with its usual grist of criminal cases. The Grand Jury was in session and Bush was promptly indicted.

For the first few days after the killing of Mexican Pete it was quite generally understood that the trial would be merely a perfunctory affair, and that his slayer would go scot free; the derved

yaller cuss had deserved killing, anyhow, and it wouldn't take a jury more than two minutes so to decide—sure thing.

A few days later, however, a vague rumor began to be heard that Bush might not get off so easily. The Mexican population along the Gila far outnumbered the Americans, and the majority of the jury, if not all of them, might be greasers. They bitterly resented the toplofty and supercilious manners of their white neighbors, and they now planned to get square by convicting the prisoner of murder in the first degree. They proposed to prove that Bush had gone to Pete's game for the sole purpose of picking a row, and it was whispered that a half dozen of the witnesses had put their heads together and framed up evidence which would hang him.

Old Boling, the prosecuting attorney, was a candidate for re-election, and, as he depended upon the Mexican vote to win, it was a foregone conclusion that he would make a great effort to please his friends by securing a conviction. Boling was a big, bombastic Irishman, drunken and unscrupulous, but he possessed considerable ability and could talk the brand off a calf, so it began to look black for Bush; and while he was a stranger in whom we had no particular interest, he was at

least a white man and we felt in duty bound to see him through. But what could we do?

Bud went out to camp the morning after the shooting and remained there. Having met with one rebuff at the hands of the stranger, it wasn't to be expected that he would now come to the front with offers of help, and Bud was the only man who knew aught of the prisoner. On the day preceding the trial, however, he marshaled the entire Seven Bar outfit, and, with no explanation or hint of his purposes, rode with the boys to the county seat. He held a long conference with Steve, the sheriff, and from him learned that the Mexicans had everything cut and dried. Then something happened. Bud went to see the prisoner; visited him in his cell and remained for more than an hour.

Next day court was opened, with a judge from Tucson in the chair. The people vs. Joseph Bush was the first case called. In this could be seen the fine Italian hand of the prosecuting attorney; he was properly catering to his dusky constituents by placing this case first on the calendar.

To the judge's inquiry, Bush replied that he had no counsel, whereupon his Honor appointed as his defense young Boling, nephew of the prosecutor, a half baked lunger who had been loafing around Arizona for a year or two, and who knew

just about as much of criminal law as a broncho knows about the parallax of Jupiter. Oh! it was a sweet scented frame-up, and no mistake!

The Seven Bar outfit, herded together near the amen corner which held the jury benches, were manifestly indignant at this palpable miscarriage of justice, and expressed their displeasure in more or less audible cuss words; but with Bud's meaning shake of the head they subsided.

The choosing of the jury consumed less than an hour; nine Mexicans and three "galvanized" white men. To the charge of murder the prisoner pleaded "not guilty." Then the prosecuting attorney lifted his ponderous bulk from the chair and began his opening. The fair repute of an orderly and law-abiding community, where men were wont to fraternize in peace and harmony, had been sullied by the black and awful crime of murder, he said. In pursuit of his avocation, while winning his daily bread, an honored citizen, a princely man of parts, a distinguished member of this embryo commonwealth, a much loved friend of many gentlemen now within sound of his voice, had been done to death, cruelly slaughtered by this wandering vagabond, this man of blood. Even as a beast of prey, snared at his kill, red handed, this murderous fiend had been apprehended at the scene of his crime; aye, even

before the last sigh of his victim had sped a noble soul to its reward, the majestic arm of the law had been stretched forth to seize, and hold, and punish this wanton slayer of men. And now the law would avenge the foul deed. The gentlemen of the jury had a simple but sacred duty to perform. They would find this ruffian guilty. In all his years of service the prosecuting attorney had not been privileged to address a jury more ably equipped to pass upon matters of grave import than the twelve good men and true who now faced him. In each juror's honest eyes he saw flaming the sacred fire of high resolve, the unfaltering purpose of good citizenship. In their untarnished hands the cause of law and order along the Gila would be safe. The gentlemen of the jury had heard this human viper utter his disclaimer, had heard him plead "not guilty"; yet they should hear from the lips of many unimpeachable witnesses that Pedro Martinez had died from four gunshot wounds inflicted by the prisoner. Aye! more than this, the jury would hear; they would learn that the murder was the culmination of a deliberate plot on the part of this inhuman assassin. The state would prove that Bush had sought out his victim, had studied his habits of life, and, when the unsuspecting Martinez was in a position impossible of defense, had laid violent hands upon him and then killed him, etc., etc.

During the hour which Boling had occupied in this scathing denunciation, the prisoner sat calmly gazing into space, apparently the least interested individual in the room. As the prosecutor paused Bush eyed him for a moment, then, in the dead silence, spat; audibly and contemptuously he spat, and uttered the one word "wind!"

Every white man in the room, except Boling, snickered right out in meeting; even the judge got behind a law book to hide his smile, as Steve, the sheriff, with a broad grin on his face, pounded vigorously for order.

After the dinner recess Boling called his witnesses, who gave their testimony glibly, nor was their damning evidence in the least shaken by the farcical cross-examination indulged in by Boling, Jr.

When court adjourned for the day the meshes of the law had been drawn very close about the prisoner, and we all knew that when the farce was ended Bush would surely be convicted, which probably meant hanging. The best he could hope for was a long term at Yuma.

There was no poker game that night; instead, we sat in a gloomy group, cudgeling our brains for some plan whereby we could prevent a seemingly decent white man from being railroaded to his doom by a pack of dirty greasers. But what

could be done? The only witnesses to the tragedy were the Mexicans who were swearing his life away, and we knew that the jury would do the bidding of the prosecuting attorney to the letter.

While a man is on trial for his life it is irregular to allow visitors in his cell; but we were an easy-going lot in Arizona and the sheriff was white, so he granted Bud's earnest request for another interview with Bush. It was late at night when he returned, and we afterward found him unusually reserved and taciturn.

Next morning the trial proceeded. When the witnesses for the state had concluded their testimony, Bush was placed on the stand in his own defense. He told a straightforward story of the affair, with no apparent effort to enlist the sympathies of court or jury; admitted that he had played at Pete's table during the afternoon, losing some money to him; returning in the evening he had for a time been an on-looker, while he carefully watched the gambler and had detected his method of cheating by palming cards; later he had sat into the game and began playing. When he saw Martinez' attempt to steal his money by cheating he had protested, and had exposed the trick by leaning over the table and showing up the palmed card in the dealer's hand. Martinez had immediately reached for his gun, and, knowing that his

own life was in danger, he had pulled and fired. He had never seen the dead man until the day prior to the killing; had no grudge against him; had not sought a quarrel, and had killed him only in self-defense. He had no apologies to offer and was not a d——d bit sorry. Yes, he reckoned that was all.

When Bush left the stand, resuming his seat by the under-sheriff, every cowman and rancher in the room, from teeth to toenails, was his, and he knew it.

It was now mid-day and again court adjourned. As the indignant punchers lined up at Nate's for the ante-prandial libation there was much low talk, and Bud was requested to act as chairman of a ways and means committee; but he only shook his head and said, "Wait some." It was noticed, however, that his eyes were bloodshot and that he gulped down three very big drinks in about as many minutes, all of which gave some uneasiness to those who knew his several sides.

The afternoon session was consumed by the pleading of the attorneys, *pro* and *con*. It was mostly *con*, however, as old Boling certainly did himself proud. For three hours he ranted and roared and perspired, as he alternately threatened and cajoled that moss agate jury, thereby se-

curely clinching votes enough to re-elect himself twice over.

The attorney for the defense made a very lady-like talk of thirty minutes, and said nothing. The state closed with another whirlwind of words from the prosecutor, in which he demanded instant conviction for murder in the first degree.

It was now supper time and the judge adjourned court for two hours, stating that, in order to clear the calendar of this case, he would hold an evening session, when he would deliver his charge to the jury.

Again the cow crowd leaned their elbows on Nate's bar and talked ugly. In the midst of it we were amazed to see Bud and the judge walk in. As the bar was crowded they sat at a table and ordered drinks. Mr. McKlintock appeared to have a large sized cargo aboard, but he could walk and talk straight enough and was giving the judge an animated dissertation upon the Gila Valley as the ideal cow country.

The judge's pet tippie was the seductive gin fizz, which had just made its *début* in that country, and he proceeded to put one away at a gulp. As he set the glass down he remarked that he didn't think much of Nate's gin, and rose to go to supper; but Bud insisted that he sit down and have another, at the same time admonishing the

barkeep that it was extremely bad form to serve distinguished guests, such as the judge and himself, with any but the best liquors. Once more the legal luminary looked through a glass darkly and slid the drink down his neck without stopping to taste it, and again shook his head with the remark that he could get better gin than that in Tombstone or Tucson.

At supper the judge complained of the heat, ate a few mouthfuls and suddenly excused himself.

At eight o'clock, the hour set for the evening session, the sheriff announced that the judge was suffering from the fatigue of the day but would appear in a few minutes, and at the same time directed his deputy to bring in the prisoner. His Honor presently came in and, after consulting his papers, arose to deliver his charge. But, after ponderously clearing his throat a couple of times, he faltered, and again adjourned court for thirty minutes. As he left the room, accompanied by the sheriff, it was noticed that he was very pale and walked unsteadily.

As there was to be a wait of only a half hour, the under-sheriff didn't trouble himself to take the prisoner back to his cell, but kept him in his seat by the window at the end of the jury benches.

Men began talking to neighbors and everyone lounged at ease.

There was only one door to the courtroom, and it was at this door the Right Rev. Bud McKlintock now appeared in full regalia. He had two sixes on his belt, and a Winchester lay conveniently across his arm. Mr. McKlintock was not beastly sober, and on his face was the ugly grin which usually betokened war and pestilence for such unfortunates as might arouse his displeasure.

“Friends, Romans and countrymen, likewise, greasers, Injuns and sheep herders,” he began; then, apparently noticing the vacant chair on the rostrum, he varied the style of his harangue. “Whar’s his giblets who wears the brass collar and pronounces the benediction?”

The under-sheriff yelled back, “Court’s adjourned fer a half hour, and you git outen here with them guns, or I’ll arrest you fer contempt of court.”

“Ain’t no court till the jedge gets back,” giggled Mr. McKlintock.”

“It don’t make no difference,” blustered the deputy; “you drop that gun or I’ll——” and he was climbing out of his chair when old Bud slid the Winchester to his shoulder and pulled down on Mr. Deputy.

“Tickled plum to death to oblige you!” he roared. “I’ve got one of ’em dropped, and if you don’t get yer hams back into that chair, and set mighty quiet, I’ll drop you. *Sabe?*”

The deputy was wise in his generation and sat tight. Mr. McKlintock’s eyes and rifle swung around over the heads of the crowd, as he resumed. “Seein’s the president is right busy for a few minutes unmuggin’ hisself from them gin fizzys of hisn, I’m agoin’ to try, in my ’umble and unvarnished way, to entertain you gents till he gets back. I’m agoin’ to help out the prosecuting attorney by telling the jury what a onery cuss that prisoner is, and while I’m talkin’ I don’t want nary damn man to get frolicsome. Don’t make no quick moves, reachin’ for something, ’cause you won’t have time to get it; and don’t holler at me, nor nuthin’ like that, ’cause I ain’t well, and when I’m nervous anything sudden might make my trigger finger so shaky that it would pull this gun off accidental. And,” he added slowly, “when I pull a gun off something most always gets hit.”

As he paused, he again swung the rifle carelessly over the heads of the crowd, which action was promptly responded to by a general ducking of heads in deference to the possibilities named.

Mr. McKlintock grinned approvingly. “That’s

right. You fellers are learning your lesson like a calf learns to suck. Just keep a-trottin' down the same trail you're on and there won't be a bit of trouble; but don't forgit to remember that while the judge is rastlin' with that gin fusee, I'm the boss sawyer of the works."

Just then something occurred which drew every eye elsewhere. With a sudden bound the killer of Mexican Pete landed on the ledge of the open window, flung its two Mexican occupants to the floor, and swung himself out into the night. The crowd, for one brief instant, dazed by the daring and the audacity of the escape, sat motionless, then half the men in the room were on their feet.

"Set down!" thundered the voice of old Bud at the door, and its tone carried a menace which meant short shrift for the first two or three of them who dared accept the hazard. His sombrero was tilted far back, and the light of the lamps showed the cold gray eyes, now narrowed to mere slits, from which glinted two pin points of savage light, as he looked along the shining weapon as if seeking his first target. One look at the sternly protruding jaw and the finger which toyed with the trigger seemed sufficient. Without a word of protest or remonstrance the deputy and that ravening mob of greasers sank into their seats. The rapid clacketty-clack of horses' feet on the sun-

baked earth told us that Bush was speeding away in the darkness, and we knew that the rataplan of the hoof beats was sending a message of joy and safety to his heart. As the clatter of flying feet grew faint in the stillness Bud slowly lowered the rifle, and lapsed once more into his ugly grin.

“Do you fellers know what that bloody murderer, the prisoner at the bar, has gone and done? He’s gone and added another crime to his unpurty record. He’s stole my hoss, my Comanche, not mentioning two guns I had strapped on the saddle. He’s a bad crowd, that feller. He ain’t got a bit more sense than to shoot any man who tried to stop him, and that’s why I told you fellers to set down when he bucked through the winder. I object to havin’ the flower and the pride of this here embryo commonwealth, as old Boling calls you, shot up and disfigured by a damn, low-down Texan like Bush. I know him—knowed him a long time, and now I’m agoin’ to tell you about him.”

“Say, Bud,” called out Fonda from the amen corner, “there’s about a dozen of your friends settin’ here by me, and we figger that we’d be a heap more comfortable behind that stomach pump of Mr. Winchester’s, that you’re handling so care-

lessly, than we are in front of it. 'Spose we come back and line up alongside of you?"

"Hold your discard, Billy, and don't delay the game," affably responded Mr. McKlintock; "I know where you're at and I know who's with you, but there ain't no call to mix the deal. I'm only trying to keep the Honorable Mr. Boling and his black and tan friends from gettin' hurt by runnin' up agin a bad man out there in the dark. I'm adoin' God's service by saving their lives, and they are going to set still and meeklike while I tell 'em some more things about him which Boling forgot to mention.

"As I was sayin', I know that feller; knowed him since he was a yearlin' and he kinder belongs to me. I've got my mark on him. Mebbe you noticed it arunnin' clean across his face. My daddy and his daddy lived side by side on the Brazos and they was bunkies together during the Mexican war. When they come home they brung a couple of cavalry sabres and gave 'em to us kids. Him and me used to have a whole passel of fun with them old blades, makin' cavalry charges on foot agin' the sunflowers and jimsons out back of the corral. Bush always was a hard-mouthed, contrary cuss, had second-story notions about things, and would carry 'em out spite of hell and high water. When me and him was 'long

about fifteen he got an appetite for killin' Injuns, and his daddy had to larrup him plenty to keep him from takin' pot shots at the Kiowa bucks hangin' round the settlements. The Kiowas were a thievin' lot and it kept the ranchers some busy watchin' the stock. Once in a while a white man would ride out on the range and never come back no more, and then his folks would plug another Injun, just to keep the tally even; so there wasn't no love lost between them and us. My little sister was turnin' fourteen and was the purtiest thing in seven counties and the best girl ever lived. She didn't take after the men folks of the family. There was a young Kiowa buck kept bringin' her beaded stuff and such truck, and pesterin' her, till one day my daddy got suspicious, pulled on him and gave him sixty seconds by the watch to hit the sky line. When his pony got him out of range he shook his fist and yelled something sassy at the old man. He acted so ugly that we knowed he meant dirt, so Sissy was told to keep close to the house. One evening, 'bout a week after, she went for the cows down in the bottoms, right in plain sight of the barn, and that dam Injun, who had been layin' for just such a chance, come sky-hootin' out of an arroya and, after knockin' her down and chokin' her senseless, he slings her onto his horse and puts for the hills. Nobody seen him

do it but we missed Sissy in a little while, and then we found his pony tracks making southwest for the bad country, where there wasn't any settlers. In a half hour my daddy and Bush's daddy had got together ten men and was aridin' hell bent for election on that Kiowa's trail. There was an Injun town about twenty miles up in the hills, and they was makin' for that. Me and Joe was left with the wimmin, 'cause we was considered too short at one end for such excursions. Mother was acryin' and wringin' her hands and Joe's mammy was tryin' to comfort her, so us boys had plenty of time to talk it over. Joe was mad to the bone; jest plum locoed; said he knowed the posse was going to the wrong place; that they ought to have gone to the old camp further south, and that they never would catch that Injun. Just that minute I was called into the house; when I came back Joe had skinned out. 'Bout twenty minutes later I heard him whistle for me from behind the corral, and there he was on his buckskin pony, all primped out in Injun clothes, and his face smeared over with walnut stain and paint till he looked like a sure enough Kiowa. Then he told me he was goin' after Sissy, and that he wasn't comin' home till he got her and got that Injun, too. I tried to argue some but he told me to shet up and go look after the wimmin; then

the night kinder swallowed him up and I never expected to see him again.

“But he came back; he has got a way of always comin’ back. He’ll come back here some day, and when he comes you Latin American gents that did the tall swearin’ agin him want to dive head first into a dog hole and stay there; for he’ll git you, sure’n hell!

“Well, when the wimmin found Joe had gone on a still hunt all by his lonesome, both mothers was acryin’ and I felt a heap like bellerin’ myself. Long about midnight they was cried out and got kinder quiet; then I laid down on the kitchen bench to rest and went sound asleep. Must have slept about four hours, during which time I was dreamin’ awful things about Sissy and was fightin’ Injuns to beat four of a kind, when a noise woke me up, and right there in the door was that young Kiowa with my sister in his arms. It was only half light and I was half asleep, beside being skeered stiff; but I woke up enough to grab one of them old sabres and fetch him a two-handed swipe across the face. He hollers out, ‘Christ! it’s me, Bud!’ and then Joe and Sissy was both layin’ on the floor and him ableedin’ like a stuck shoat.

“That kid, that half-grown boy, had follered the Injun to the old camp in the hills, where his

huntin' instinct had told him to go, and when he got within a quarter of a mile of it he could hear pore Sissy screamin' and beggin'; so Joe found his work all staked out for him.

"They was in an old wickyup and the Kiowa, hearing Joe's rush, met him at the opening and let drive with his rifle almost in the boy's face; but he missed, and 'fore he could pump another shell he had mother Bush's old butcher knife playin' hide and seek with his liver, lights, lungs and other vital statistics too numerous to mention. After the carving match was over, Joe, not understandin' the fine points of scalpin' and desiring to play safe on that particular Kiowa remaining a good Injun afterwards, he sawed the damn skunk's head off and tied it behind his saddle. Then he took my little sister and brung her home, her acryin' and amoanin' all the way. She had been abused something awful, and for more than a week we thought that she would die.

"When the posse got back next day and heard it all, they sent riders for fifty miles gathering the cow men. Then they had a clean-up which furnished the buzzards with Kiowa meat for a month.

"Five years after that Joe married my sister, and spent twenty years takin' care of her like she was a baby, for she never was well or strong

afterward. Last summer she was worse, and they wrote for me to come home. Not thinkin' she was bad sick I put off goin' till after we got through with the tally branding, and she died without me seein' her again.

“Joe kinder went to pieces after that. He sold his bunch and wandered from one place to another, drinkin' some and gamblin' a good bit tryin' to forget the little white-faced woman, my sister, who had taken the long trail and left him behind, lonesome and heartbroken. Some of you fellows remember how he refused to shake hands with me when he came here. Well, he was sore because I hadn't come home as soon as they wrote for me to see her before she died; and he was dead right about it, too.

“And now you have heard the rest of the story about Bush, the bad man, the bloodthirsty beast of prey, the dastardly murderer who killed that distinguished citizen, Mexican Pete, as Boling told you about in his speech. I've told you what a low-down coward he is, and it wouldn't be no trick at all for a half dozen of you fightin' men to chase him down before he can reach the Sonora line. He's only got two guns and a belt full of shells, so there won't be a bit of danger, and he would just love to see you. And when you get him, you might just bring back that Comanche

hoss of mine; he's the fastest pony round here, and I shore would admire to have him again."

There were footsteps in the hall and Bud, as he slipped through the door, was heard to inquire solicitously, "How are you afeelin' by this time, Jedge? Say, you ought to shake them gin fizzys, the're mostly wind and water, anyhow, and natch-erly a man can't stack up agin 'em same as he can agin straight bug juice. I've been entertainin' the crowd with a little story till you got back. So long, Steve." Then he was gone.

There was instant confusion and the big deputy came tearing down the aisle, shouting to the sheriff that the prisoner had escaped and threatening Bud with all sorts of vengeance.

Everybody talked at once, as Boling and the Judge conferred with the officers, who then searched the saloons and other possible hiding places in the village, but neither Mr. McKlintock nor the prisoner were drinking that evening.

In the meantime the cow men and other solid members of the community had a pow wow with Boling and told him a few things which might have greater or less bearing upon his future state of health. They also made it plain to the Judge that there were not enough officers in Arizona to recapture Bush or to keep him in jail if they did take him, and that the very best thing to do was

to forget it. The men who did the talking were so deadly earnest in their statements that Boling saw a great light, and broke up the show by declaring that his memory was so bad that he had already forgotten.

An hour later Fonda went out to shift the picket stakes; Bud's horse was missing, and from the gloom of the sage brush covered plain, from the dim trail which stretched away toward the foothills of Mt. Graham and our camp, came the soft "coo-ee," the call of the Seven Bar clan. Five minutes sufficed for the gathering of the lads and our outfit rode out on the home stretch, where we found Bud awaiting us.

We were hastening to explain the new conditions when he curtly gave the order, "Ride!" and, spurring into the lead, set the pace. For an hour the ponies kept to the easy swinging canter which has made the cow horse famous for endurance, then, as they slowed down to a walk, Gillespie made a call down for information. "Say, Bud, what kind of a job did you put up to get the Judge sick and out of the courtroom long enough for you to make that talk and let Joe get a five mile start?"

Mr. McKlintock leaned far back in his saddle, and, to the surprise of all, turned loose a "haw haw" of laughter which might have been heard a

mile. "It was the gin fuzzy that did the business, I reckon," he replied, and once more the echoes of his mirth awoke the silent places and set us all in a roar.

"But how?" persisted Gillespie. "What did you put in 'em?"

"Who? me? I didn't touch 'em," replied Bud, "but I had a little beforehand talk with Nate, and he fixed 'em plenty. He had a little bottle behind the bar that was left there by a freighter. I couldn't swear what was in it and I never asked no questions, but I saw the label and it said 'Ipecac.' Haw, haw, haw! Whoop-ee. Now ride some more. I'm supposed to be drunk, and camp is the best place for a man with a hide full of corn juice."

Confidentially, Bud wasn't drunk—not a little bit.

THE KING OF CALAVERAS.

Snail paced and heavily the stage lumbered through the six-inch layer of dust which lay thick upon the ore road into Calaveras. Of the eight-horse team, only the heads of the leaders were occasionally visible; all else, including the vehicle and its occupants, being completely enveloped in eddying clouds of red brown dust brought up by each footfall of the plodding animals.

The fierce glare of the afternoon sun added its quota of discomfort to the half blinded, half suffocated passengers, who had for the past three hours silently endured.

Earlier in the day there had been some desultory conversation, in which the usual civilities had been exchanged. The lean, strong featured young man on the front seat had gravely tendered his card to each of his two companions in misery. It bore the simple legend, "John Calvin King, Mining Engineer."

Beyond the statement that he was looking about California in the interest of a client, he vouchsafed no information.

He learned that the heavy jowled gentleman

opposite him was Mr. Smythe, Secretary of the Mother Lode Mining Company, bound for the Company's headquarters in the Calaveras hills after a visit to Stockton, where he had met the young lady, Miss Kittie Saunders, a niece of Colonel Tom Saunders, president of the Company, and was now escorting her home.

Miss Saunders had volunteered the statement that she was returning from a six months' visit to New England, and was enthusiastically happy in getting back to her beloved California.

King promptly decided that he didn't particularly fancy Mr. Smythe but that he did rather like the girl. There was about her an air of dainty refinement, and in her voice was the indefinable something that bespoke a clean-souled and wholesome character.

Then came the dust, and save the creaking of leather and the complaint of the springs, all was silence in the Calaveras stage.

After interminable hours the road gradually lifted from the dust-laden plain into the cleaner going and fresher air of the foothills. At six o'clock they pulled up at the first hill station, where supper and a fresh team were had.

It was during the meal that Jack King first heard of Lonesome Smith and his exploits as stage robber and general holdup man.

Smith had first appeared in Calaveras a couple of years previously, and almost immediately there had begun in the region a series of depredations which caused the records of former road agents to pale into insignificance. The crimes were soon traced to Smith and his arrest was attempted by the sheriff and three deputies. In the battle which followed every man of the posse was wounded, while Smith escaped unhurt. A few months later he had reappeared and three holdups followed in quick succession. Again there was pursuit and fighting, and again the lone highwayman escaped, leaving as a souvenir of his visit a brace of badly wounded officers.

It was during this second visitation that Smith had, in broad daylight, held up the office of the Mother Lode Company and forced the cashier to rifle the safe for his benefit. The fellow's cold-blooded daring and the fact that he worked entirely alone, had earned for him the sobriquet of "Lonesome Smith, King of Calaveras."

Six times during the last two years he had cleaned up the district, each time escaping unhurt, though twenty men had shot at him and a number of them had gone down under his fire.

Mr. Smythe, on behalf of the Company, had offered a reward of one thousand dollars for the body of the freebooter, dead or alive, which called

forth from Lonesome a sarcastic response by letter, advising that, in view of the long waits between plays, the ante be increased to something worth while. The communication closed with the warning that Smythe would sooner or later be compelled to eat one or more of those yellow handbills upon which the terms of the reward were set forth.

All this and more of the same sort King heard during supper at the first hill station. Consequently, it was with rather more than passing interest that he overheard a remark of the station keeper, who had called Smythe aside as they were about to start.

“No, I haint positiv, but it shore looked like the King. He was eatin’ by the spring in Red Gulch. When he seed me pull up the mules fer a better look, he reached over sorter careless like and drawed a Winchester up from behind a rock, jest as much as tew say, ‘Uh huh, it’s me. Want any?’ An’ I giv them lines a regular shove gettin’ the mules agoin’. I hain’t lost no Kings, me.”

Smythe was plainly worried as they resumed their places, but he said nothing as the stage started upon the last lap of the journey, a twenty mile drive to the town of B——, near which was located the Mother Lode mine.

King noticed that Smythe resumed certain little

attentions toward the young lady which plainly implied proprietorship, and he also noticed, with some amusement, that the girl invariably resented these airs.

The road now lay through the second tier of foothills rising rapidly toward the higher peaks, looming dome-like in the evening sunlight. The night breeze from the high Sierras was already astir, bringing down through the aisle-like gulches deliciously cool draughts from the snow-capped summit of the mountain range to the eastward.

The young lady no longer wore the thick gauze veil, which the dust had made necessary, and King now had ample opportunity to study the charming young face opposite him. He found a positive witchery in the frank brown eyes which coolly appraised his face, his hands, clothing, and finally, with a mischievous twinkle, seemed to fix themselves upon a point in space apparently about three inches above the crown of his hat, King wanted to talk, or rather, he wanted her to talk.

"How long have you lived in this part of California, Miss Saunders?" he inquired politely.

"Oh, a long time. I came with Uncle when he first opened the mine, nearly four years ago," she replied, the brown beacon lights shining steadily into his own.

“Have you ever happened across the trail of this wonderful road agent we have been hearing so much of?” he inquired further.

“Who, the King of Calaveras?” she responded gaily. “No, I have never been so fortunate, though I should dearly love to meet him face to face. I am curious to know just what manner of man he is. It is unlikely that I shall have that interesting experience, however, as I understand that he does not affect the society of ladies. Mere men, with fat pocketbooks, are doubtless more to his liking. Wouldn’t it be fun if he should hold us up on the slatestone hill this evening?”

King laughed at this quaint sally, while Smythe grunted a rather contemptuous “Humph!”

“What would you do,” she asked, turning suddenly to Smythe, “if Lonesome Smith should stop us?”

“Take a shot at him, I suppose,” muttered Smythe, “though it wouldn’t be a very healthy thing to do.”

“Fine!” she cried, and in her tone King detected a note of incredulous raillery. “I do so admire brave men.”

Then facing King, she challenged, “And you, Mr. John Calvin King, how would you respond to the King of Calaveras should he demand tribute?”

Her voice had dwelt unnecessarily long on the Calvin in King's triple title and the mirth in her eyes caused that young man's face to flush, as he replied with great deliberation, "Don't know just how I should perform under such circumstances; give up everything I had, probably. Let us hope that the royal exchequer needs no replenishing at this writing and that we may escape the hands of his lonesome Majesty."

"Oh, dear!" she wailed; "I was so in hopes that you were also brave, Mr. King. With two undaunted champions I should feel quite safe, but perhaps the daring of Mr. Smythe will suffice."

She was plainly poking fun at both men and both resented it, each in his own fashion. Smythe fumed noisily, declaring that he had never been known as a coward, and if he ever got within shooting distance of Lonesome, he proposed to pot him. King spoke no word in response to her banter, but he leaned forward and looked once into the girl's eyes, and as he looked, her eyes fell, for she read there an unvoiced reproof which caused her to glance aside into the gray shadows into which they had now entered.

For a half mile or more the road wound round a thickly wooded hill and no conversation was indulged in as the vehicle progressed through the twilight of the timber. The driver was whistling

"Buffalo Gals" for the tenth consecutive time, the horses had already emerged from the thick canopy of the wood and the stage was passing the last of the large trees at the edge of the open, when the driver's tune ended in a sudden squawk, as he gave a convulsive surge on the reins, stopping the team.

A man stepped from behind a tree within six feet of the wheels, with the one word "Whoa!"

Over the lower face was tied an ordinary bandana handkerchief, leaving the eyes free. In either hand was a huge navy six, which seemed to be pointed directly at each of the travelers, driver included.

"Hands up, and keep 'em up! I'm Smith!"

Four pairs of hands were instantly elevated.

"Get down here, you!" was the next gruff order, addressed to the driver who, with hands still above his head, jumped to the ground. "Now open that door with your left hand, and don't fergit t'other one stays up."

The driver wrenched open the door of the stage and stood aside.

"Git out, all of yuh," commanded the highwayman roughly, "and don't try no funny business."

King, being nearest the door, climbed out.

"Stand there!" one of the big guns nodded toward the driver.

Next came the girl. She was a trifle pale, but gave no sign of fear, as she stepped out beside King.

Then, with much haste and undue floundering, the rotund Smythe stood beside his fellow passengers.

Again one of the guns nodded to the driver, and with it came the command, "Face the other way, then back up till you feel this piece of iron agin the middle of yer back."

Obediently the driver faced about and stepped backward toward the masked man, till he felt the pistol muzzle between his shoulders, his knees wobbling visibly.

"Turn your pockets inside out, yuh might have a mouse trap er a shootin' iron about yer person."

"No, I ain't, Lonesome, honest I haint," faltered the scared Jehu, but his hands flew into his several pockets, as the voice behind him rasped out, "Shet up," and he felt an ominous prod against his spine. "Now, turn that young feller round and search him."

The search through King's pockets revealed nothing more deadly than a bunch of keys, a watch, purse, pen knife and memorandum books, all of which were piled in a little heap."

"Go through that fat thing next," ordered

Smith grimly, and Mr. Smythe faced about for the search.

The first thing encountered in the side pocket of his traveling coat was a highly finished, pearl handled automatic revolver, a truly dangerous weapon in the right hands.

"Huh!" growled the mask, "you must a been expectin' trouble, havin' that thing so handy. Didn't have quite sand enough to pull her though, did yuh, heh? Fling it over yander in the bresh, driver, he's liable to hurt hisself packin' things like that. What else has he got? Dig it out!"

A large roll of bills, a small coin purse and sundry small articles completed the inventory of Smythe's possessions.

Miss Saunders was next.

"Young lady, do you happen to have any hardware about your clothes?"

"None," answered Miss Saunders, as she giggled audibly.

"Think it's funny, huh?" growled he of the mask, his manner instantly alert and suspicious.

"No, indeed," purred the girl, "nothing in the least funny about this. I was only thinking of a remark concerning you which I heard a man make not long since," and again she tittered.

"Well, you save your fun and work it off on some other feller. Go over thar and sit down on

that log outer the way. I don't pester no wimmin folks."

Then to the driver, savagely, "Now hustle out that box, and don't keep me waiting. I'm foolin' away too much time."

"I hain't got no box this trip, Mr. Lonesome," whined the driver, scared stiff by the steely light in Lonesome's eyes. "Honest to God, I ain't. You can look in the boot for yourself."

"No box?" demanded Smith. "Where is it? This is the fourteenth, tomorrow is pay day at the Mother Lode, and I got it straight that this stage was to take in the money. Where is it?"

"I don't know about that, I only know I ain't got it. You can ask Mr. Smythe there, he's secretary of the Mother Lode, and he'll tell you I'm talking straight."

"Hell!" roared the infuriated bandit, "do you mean to tell me I been fooled and been wastin' time over small change like that," glancing contemptuously at the money on the ground.

Failure to secure the expected treasure seemed to madden the man and he cursed his luck with vile oaths. Then he suddenly shoved his left hand pistol into his belt and, striding to Smythe, whirled him about.

"So, you're the man who bid a thousand for me, dead or alive, huh? Posted handbills over the

County, offering a thousand for Lonesome Smith, the King of Calaveras! I writ a letter and told yuh that yuh would have to eat one of them bills. I've got your rations right here in my inside pocket, and now you're agoin' to eat."

Producing the bill, he punctured the folded paper with the point of the pistol and extended it to Smythe. "Chaw her up, and swaller her, yuh pot-bellied goat, or I'll blow a hole through yuh."

Smythe's usually purplish red face was now gray with terror. He knew that the ruthless devil who stood there fingering the gun trigger so carelessly, would pistol him with no more compunction than if he were a jack rabbit, and yet he hesitated to submit tamely to this humiliation in the presence of the girl, whose shoulders were now shaking convulsively with some suppressed emotion, but whether laughter or sobs he could not determine.

"Mr. Smith," he began—

"Eat it, you pup," yelled the highwayman, made doubly furious by this temporizing. "Chaw it up, and if there's a scrap of that paper as big as yer thumb nail left unswallered in twenty seconds, you'll finish it in hell! Sabe?"

There was no mistaking the deadly purpose of the man, and Smythe dallied not. He tore off a

great corner of the handbill, and stuffing it into his mouth, "chewed" with great activity.

Smith, gloating over his victim and taunting him meanwhile, for one moment relaxed his vigilance, and in that moment came his undoing.

During the foregoing colloquy Jack King had stood with arms rigidly extended upward, the bandit behind him and, consequently, unseen. But as Smythe began to swallow the hastily masticated paper, half choking in the attempt, the robber laughed his derision and slapped the fat jowls with open hand. Smythe staggered back a pace, followed by his tormentor. This brought both men slightly in front of King, the highwayman only a couple of feet distant. As Smythe again choked in his effort to swallow the wad of pulp in his throat, Lonesome shifted the gun from right to left hand, that he might use the former for a more effective blow. For an instant the brawny neck of the outlaw was turned sidewise to view, and in that brief space one of the brown bony hands above King's head shot downward in a mighty swing, landing with a vicious "sput" directly below Smith's left ear. The subsequent proceedings interested the "King of Calaveras" no more for several minutes. The man's knees collapsed utterly and he fell face downward, arms sprawling. As the blow landed, the trigger finger

closed convulsively, the big gun exploding with a roar, but as it was pointed at nothing in particular, the only result was a harmless rent in the atmosphere.

Almost before the bandit's face touched the ground King was astride him, and the two hands drawn tightly together across the back, at the same time securing both pistols.

"Bring me a rope or strap," he called to the driver, but that much chastened citizen was now quieting the team which, frightened by the shot, was plunging badly.

"I'll get the rope for you," called out the girl, and, darting to the stage, returned with a horse halter.

She was not laughing now and her face had lost something of its color, but the eyes were steady and unafraid as she handed him the tether.

"You're a brick," he said simply, as he deftly lashed the outlaw's arms together, and then securely tied his lower limbs, the prisoner meanwhile lying apparently lifeless.

"Do you think he is dead?" asked the girl a bit nervously.

"No, just knocked silly. He'll wake up presently. See, he is stirring now."

Smythe, who had been gagging and sputtering in his efforts to rid himself of the handbill in

his throat, his face livid with rage, save where the red brand of the outlaw's blow had marked him, now made a dash for the two pistols which lay near by.

"I'll kill him," he screamed; "I'll blow his head clean off."

He had secured one of the guns when King reached him.

"Hold on, Mr. Smythe," he said, "you can't do anything like that."

"Can't, eh?" shrieked the maddened secretary. "I'll show you. I'll kill him as I would a snake."

King caught his wrist and wrested the weapon away, then tried to reason with him, but the man was beyond reason. He snatched for the other pistol, yelling like a mad man. "Let me alone! Get out of my way, or I'll shoot you, too. I'm going to kill him! Kill him!"

King kicked the pistol beyond his reach and placed himself squarely before the rage-crazed man.

"Back up, you idiot, or I'll knock you into the middle of next week. You can't kill a man, a prisoner, who is tied and helpless; why that's murder. Furthermore, he is my prisoner, and I'll dispose of him as I like."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked

Smythe, cowed by the younger man's firmness.

"Turn him over to the sheriff; what other disposition did you suppose I would make of him?"

"He ought to be killed," growled the secretary, "and I would like to have a shot at him."

"You had a chance as you sat in the stage with your hand on your weapon; why didn't you take your shot then?" asked King contemptuously. Then, turning to the driver, he added, "He's awake now; help me to lift him in."

Lonesome Smith sat up dazedly and inquired weakly, "What was it?"

"Oh, you jest changed your mind about holding up this rig, and now you're agoin' to ride as passenger," replied the driver, who had regained his nerve, likewise his tongue.

"But what was it that fell on me?" persisted the half-conscious bandit.

"This," explained the driver, lifting King's right hand, now swollen from the terrific impact.

"Do you mean that he knocked me stiff with his bare hands, and me with two guns?"

"That's about the size of it," laughed King. "You gave me a perfectly beautiful opening and I put you out. No offense, Mr. Smith."

"Well, I'll be teetotally damned. What's your name, young feller?"

"Jack King," responded the engineer.

“King, eh?” resumed Smith. “Well, Mr. King, you’ve got the right handle hitched onto you. My name was King until about ten minutes ago, but now I reckon it’s Dennis. For two years I’ve been the ‘King of Calaveras,’ but I’m outer business. You’re it. Would you mind givin’ me a good swift kick in the pants, Mr. King, to jest sort o’ bring me to?”

Smythe started forward to administer the kick, when the engineer restrained him.

“Don’t be an ass, as well as a coward, Smythe,” he said.

After lifting aboard the bandit, who was now as venomous as a rattlesnake, and cursing Smythe and his progenitors for four generations, they proceeded on their way. As he was assisting Miss Saunders to the step, King said once more, “You’re a brick.

Regarding him with frank admiration, the girl replied: “Mr. John Calvin King, it strikes me that you are considerable of a man.”

“Cut out the long call, and make it plain Jack, for short,” he said as he smiled back at her.

“All right, plain Jack, you’re quite a man.”

Reaching the village two hours later the fallen monarch of Calaveras, sullen and silent, was turned over to the sheriff, and bidding good night to the little lady of the brown eyes, King sought

quarters in the dingy hotel of the town. He was very tired and very dusty from the long ride and luxuriated in a pail of water, the only bath tub obtainable. Stretched at length in his pajamas, King went over the events of the day.

"It's odd," he mused, "that I should have struck this Mother Lode bunch the first thing. I have made an enemy of that beast Smythe, which probably will not make my work any easier. Wonder what sort of a chap old Saunders is. That little girl is a brick, though. What pretty eyes she has. I like her a whole lot." And thinking of those wonderful eyes, Mr. Jack King, mining engineer, fell asleep to dream of them.

When he appeared at breakfast he discovered he had suddenly become famous. Driver Pete had not failed to spread a graphic account of the holdup and the capture of the redoubtable Lonesome Smith by the bare hands of this young man, and the passing on of his title to his captor. The landlord introduced him into the dining room with the crisp statement, "Men, this is the new King of Calaveras," much to the young engineer's disgust and embarrassment. But it stuck, and later on when he appeared in the street he heard the small boys sing out, "That's him; that's the new King!"

An hour later he appeared at the office of the

Mother Lode Company. Smythe met him with an ugly frown.

"Good morning. Mr. Smythe. Can I see Mr. Saunders?"

"What do you want of him?" inquired Smythe.

"I want to see him, look at him, speak to him," replied King coldly.

"Business?" queried Smythe further.

"I desire to see Mr. Saunders personally, and my business with him is my business, and his."

"Come to claim the reward for taking Smith, eh? You're not losing much time, are you? Well, if that's what you're after, your business will be with me and I'll make it short. The reward goes only after Lonesome is tried and convicted. So, if you are busy this morning, you need not waste any more time here."

"Thanks," drawled the engineer: "I had not thought of the reward, but since you mention it, I'll claim the reward at the proper time. Now, perhaps you will tell me how and when I may see Mr. Saunders."

"Hasn't come down yet. He's at his home over there on the hill."

"Very well, I'll stroll over and meet him," said the younger man, moving off.

"And, incidentally, parade yourself before the admiring glances of Miss Saunders, as the hero

of a really, truly stage robbery," sneered Smythe after him.

"I wouldn't advise you to try for honors in the hero line after yesterday, Mr. Smythe," grinned King, turning back. "Do you know what they are calling you down at the village this morning? You will henceforth be known as the 'Human Paper Mill.' "

The taunt caused Smythe to lose his head entirely.

"Look here, young chap, I want you to get off this company's property, and stay off; d'ye hear? And I'll tell you something further. You needn't hang around with any idea of paying attention to Miss Saunders. She has no time for well dressed tramps. You can take that tip from one who knows whereof he speaks."

King smiled as he received this insult, but into his eyes crept a harder glint, as he walked directly up to the secretary.

"Smythe, for some reason unknown, you have seen fit to insult me. Now, let me tell you a few things. First off, I want to say that you can be more kinds of a d——d fool than any man I've ever met. I shall see Mr. Saunders, as the responsible head of your company, and if, after our interview, he echoes your wishes, be assured I shall not trespass further on the Company's prop-

erty. It will rest solely with him. As to Miss Saunders, your remarks concerning her are those of a cad. If she belongs to you, she has my entire sympathy. I shall call on her, also, this morning, as any gentleman would do after yesterday's experiences. If she addresses me as a well dressed tramp and tells me she has no time for my attentions, I will trouble her no further. And finally, should further conversation between us become necessary, you will henceforth keep a civil tongue in your head, cutting out all these dirty slurs, otherwise I shall spoil that blue-bottle face of yours. That will be all this morning, and you will do well to remember what I've said."

With this parting shot he turned away, leaving Smythe speechless with anger.

When King presented himself at the Saunders residence all traces of his recent irritation had vanished. He was received by Col. Tom Saunders in person, a portly, loud-voiced, rather pompous individual, with shifty eyes and an unctuous laugh, which he called into requisition upon every possible occasion.

"So, you are the new 'King of Calaveras.' Haw! Haw! Come right in. Kitty has been telling me all about it. Slickest job I ever heard of. Haw! Haw! Haw! Come in. Come in. Been down to the office? Well, I suppose Smythe

explained to you that the reward offered by the Company will be forthcoming only after Lonesome has been convicted? Haw! Haw!"

"I'm not here concerning the reward, Colonel," responded the young man with some heat, at the same time tendering a letter. "I am here on business. This letter will doubtless make everything plain."

Somewhat taken aback, Saunders took the letter, and fumbling for his glasses, proceeded to read. Then a look of surprise and chagrin came over his face and the shifty eyes glanced at King uneasily. Then he rose and again extended his hand.

"Your pardon, Mr. King, for my blunder. I learn that you are the expert representing the M. & M. Syndicate who are negotiating for our property. We did not expect their representative before the twentieth. I trust you will make my home yours during your stay, Mr. King."

King thanked him for the tendered courtesy, but explained that he was already established at the village hotel and would remain there.

"Well, er, Mr. King, when will you begin your examination of the mine?"

"This afternoon, with your permission, Colonel," replied the engineer briskly. "I should like to begin in your old workings and follow your

development in its regular course up to the present time.”

“Certainly, certainly,” boomed the big fellow. “And now, if you will excuse me, I’ll go down to the office. Kittie here will do the honors.” As he hustled out the girl entered the room.

“Good morning, Mr. John Calvin King,” she said, and her face frankly bespoke her pleasure in meeting him again.

“Why the long call again?” he queried; “I thought we had compromised on plain Jack.”

“Oh, yes, Mr. Plain Jack, I believe we did arrive at some such arrangement. Do you exact a similar adjustment of the conventions from all your lady acquaintances,” she asked, eyeing him quizzically.

“Not from mere acquaintances,” he replied, “but I do expect such concession from my friends.”

“Friends! Are we friends so soon?” she asked.

“Aren’t we?” he responded earnestly. “I understood you to say as much.”

“Understood what?” gasped the astonished girl. “Are you dreaming? I spoke no such words to you. What do you mean?”

“No words,” agreed King, “but your eyes told me that we were to be friends.”

This daring statement was met by peals of laughter.

"My eyes are altogether too garrulous," she declared presently. "I shall certainly take to the veil, not only for my own self-respect, but also for the safety of unguarded travelers whom I may hereafter meet."

"They are wonderful eyes, Miss Saunders, and it would be too bad to veil them. Are we friends?" he persisted.

"Inasmuch as we have fought, bled and died together, and since you insist upon it, I think we will be friends, Mr. Plain Jack," she assented, extending her hand.

He retained the cool little hand, rather longer than seemed necessary and, looking very steadily into her face, he said simply, "That's good. I like you—a lot. And you are going to like me better than you now do. When I like people I want them to know it. That's why I declared myself. I will call again this evening, if I may," and, releasing her hand, he started for the door.

"Wait!" she said, rather peremptorily. "Sit down for a moment, Mr. Plain Jack; you are certainly the most disconcertingly slam-bang individual I've met. Do you conduct all your affairs upon the same hurry-up principle that you employ in capturing road agents or establishing friend-

ships? Now that I am one of the elect and chosen, I mean to exercise the friend's prerogative and ask questions. Who are you, Mr. Plain Jack? Or, possibly, a more proper question would be, who was your grandfather?" The brown eyes were dancing with mischief now.

"To carry this out in true story-book fashion, I suppose my grandfather should have been a pirate or the Governor of Massachusetts, but he was neither; he was a farmer. My father is a lawyer. I was born in New York, schooled at Yale, am thirty years old, mining engineer, sometimes called an expert, and am connected with a syndicate that makes a business of buying and operating mines."

"Why don't you buy my uncle's mine? I heard him say he hoped to sell it soon."

"Possibly I shall buy it," he returned. "My business here is the inspection of the Mother Lode property."

A look of incredulity flashed into her eyes. "Are you the expert he expected on the twentieth?" He nodded.

"And you traveled all day with the Secretary of the company and the niece of the president without mentioning your errand?" Again he inclined his head.

"Why?" she demanded sharply.

"My business was with the official head of the company, not with clerks nor yet with the president's niece; and, however interesting I may have found the latter, I saw no reason or necessity for disclosing my mission." The answer was straightforward and contained no suggestion of apology.

"In other words, you considered it none of my affair; now, didn't you?" she teased.

"Something like that, perhaps," he assented.

"Well," she declared, "you were right enough as to myself, but you are mistaken as to Mr. Smythe's position. True, he is only the secretary, but he wields a powerful influence. Uncle Tom owns most of the stock, but Mr. Smythe dominates him completely, not only in business, but in everything. Uncle occasionally storms about things, but he invariably gives in. Even in purely personal matters he forces Uncle to accept his point of view. I don't understand it."

"Smythe means to marry Colonel Saunders' niece, I believe," ventured King quietly.

Her face flushed hotly, as she retorted, "Aren't you presuming a bit, Mr. Plain Jack?"

"We are friends, you know, and I mean no offense," he replied.

Indignant tears shone in her eyes, as she turned again to face him. "You are right," she

admitted; "he does mean to marry me, and Uncle urges me to it, but I have not consented. I won't marry him," she declared passionately.

Rising, he took both her hands. "No, little lady, you will not marry Mr. Smythe; you have your friend Jack's word for it."

"Plain Jack," she corrected, smiling through the tears as he went away, leaving her to speculate wonderingly upon his final remark.

King found both president and secretary at the Mother Lode office that afternoon. The latter, extending his hand, began awkwardly, "I must apologize, Mr. King. You see, I didn't know that you represented the M. & M. people and——"

"I suppose that would make some difference in your attitude. We will drop it, Mr. Smythe," returned the young engineer, overlooking the hand.

"Now, Colonel, if you will furnish me with a man familiar with the workings, I'll get at it."

As King set out with his guide Smythe looked savagely after him. "The d——d prig," he growled.

"Now, look here, Smythe," argued Saunders; "don't you spoil this matter with your ugly temper. We must land this deal, if possible. You know how we are fixed, and within two months everyone will know that our shifting of the force

from the main workings into new ground, under pretence of development, is only a bluff. Our pay ore is practically exhausted and the Mother Lode won't be worth a tinker's damn this time next year. She's petered out, and our only salvation is to work her off on this M. & M. bunch. So be civil to this expert, can't you?"

"Civil!" ripped out Smythe. "Faugh! His airs turn my stomach! And say, while it's on my mind, I want you to understand that I won't have him fooling around Kittie."

"Fooling around Kittie! Why, the man never laid eyes on her till yesterday. Holy mackerel! What a chump you are over that girl."

"It makes no difference," persisted the secretary. "He was making eyes at her after that hold-up circus yesterday, and she liked it, too."

"Rats!" ejaculated the elder man, with contempt. Then, as the possibilities of the situation flashed through his brain, he turned to the other with a cunning look. "If it should pan out that you are correct in your jealous surmise, we will work it for all it's worth. Kittie is no fool and will soon discover which side of her bread the butter is on. Just leave it to Uncle Tom. Haw! Haw! I'll steer that end of the machine, all right. Leave it to me. Haw! Haw!"

"But I tell you I don't like it," angrily de-

clared the secretary. "I don't want that pie-faced dude monkeying around my girl."

"Well, what plan do you propose?" asked Saunders, exasperated. "You have quarreled with the man till he will have nothing to do with you. Shall I also fall out with him by telling him not to look at my niece? We are in a devil of a hole, and the sale of this layout is our only salvation. This young chap has it in his power to put the play over or to queer it entirely. Now, my idea is that we should make things as pleasant for him as we can. Let him fall in love with Kittie if he will. Hope to God he does. I'll give her the tip to string him along. He has no use for you, so I advise that you keep out of the way. If you have a better plan, let's hear it."

"Well, you'll never land the fish in that net of yours," sneered Smythe. "It's full of holes. If that fellow knows his business, he will finish his examination and report unfavorably inside of a week. If he is honest, he will tell his principals that the Mother Lode is a busted balloon. The thing to do is to learn his price and buy him."

"Suppose he won't be bought?" interposed the president.

"Then you must reach San Francisco before his report gets out and borrow every dollar you can raise upon your own and the company's

credit. After that we will move down to Mexico."

"I propose that we try my way first," urged Saunders. "Time enough to bid for him when we find we must."

At this instant a man's head appeared in the open window not six feet behind the two, and a hoarse voice croaked, "I want see the boss!"

Colonel Tom Saunders jumped two feet into the air, squawking like a hen, while the purple face of the secretary blanched visibly.

"What do you mean by poking your head into my private office in that fashion?" he yelled at the intruder.

"I'm on second shift in number four level. Me t'roat is sore and the gang boss won't let me lay off; so I come here to see about it."

Smythe began cursing the man, but a gesture from Saunders silenced him.

"How long have you been there, my man?" he inquired suavely.

"Been where?" asked the miner.

"There at the window."

"Oh, here? Just come. Say, kin I lay off and not lose me job?"

"Certainly you can lay off, but when you have business here again use the door." The man

thanked him gruffly and moved away, a cunning smile upon his face.

"Do you suppose he could have heard?" asked Saunders, in some trepidation.

"I don't think so; and if he did, the stupid lout couldn't repeat it."

"The darned whelp!" muttered the Colonel, lapsing again into his chair. "He scared me out of a year's growth."

King called again that evening at the house on the hill, where he was received with boisterous hospitality by Colonel Tom.

Day after day the young engineer delved into various tunnels and stopes of the mine, measuring, sampling, figuring, and each evening found him with Kittie Saunders. Sometimes they drove about on the mountain road, but more often they took long strolls, occasionally prolonging their stay on the mountain side till the lights in the village, one by one flickered out, leaving all their world to themselves alone.

Colonel Tom had hard work keeping Smythe from running amuck, that gentleman waxing more and more furious as the attentions of the young engineer became daily more pronounced.

Nearly a week had slipped away when one morning the town was electrified by the news that Lonesome Smith had broken jail and escaped. It was

quite evident that the outlaw had friends or confederates on the outside, as the tools which they had conveyed to him were found in the empty cell.

During his short imprisonment the dethroned King had talked freely of his capture, expressing the greatest admiration for the "New King of Calaveras, the young feller who put me outer business with his bare hands, mind ye, and me with two guns and the drop." He seemed greatly interested in the gossip regarding the engineer—which was freely bandied about the jail—particularly those items concerning the proposed sale of the Mother Lode.

All this was promptly reported to Jack, much to his annoyance. Steadily he pursued his labors, spending ten hours daily in the mine, but each evening found him beside the dainty little lady of his dreams. Thus far their relations had been merely those of good comrades, their conversation running the whole gamut of topics which might interest two normally intelligent young persons, and while no word of the tender passion had passed between them, he knew from the first that he loved this brown-eyed maid with a love that passed his understanding. It had awakened in him the desire and the determination to harvest his fill of sweetness from her lips, to have her as

his own, to hold her close in his arms, sheltering and protecting her so long as life should endure. He had never before been so awakened. It was the primordial mating call of the strong, and he surrendered to it unquestioningly.

Her manner, however, baffled him completely, making it impossible to pour out to her the great glad longing in his heart. At times she appeared all candor and frankness, meeting his admiring gaze with tender looks which brought to him an exquisite thrill, sent the red blood racing madly through his veins, and seemed to invite the passionate avowal pent up within him. Again, over the mobile features would creep a shadow, a distrust of him or of herself, which was like a barrier between them. At such times she became moody and aloof, studying his face with somber eyes and permitting him no word save the veriest commonplaces. That some foreign and subtle influence was upon her he felt assured, though he could not fathom it.

In the meantime Smythe was becoming more and more intractable and Colonel Tom spent hours in quieting his raging jealousy.

The daily stage brought bulky packages of mail to the young engineer, to which he made occasional short and concise replies.

One evening came a letter from his old class-

mate, Billy Gregg, who was also a member of the M. & M. Syndicate. As King read the long letter he frowned in annoyance, then laughed quietly, as he reached for a telegraph blank, upon which he wrote the following laconic message:

"William Gregg,
Care of M. & M. Syndicate,
26 Broad Street, New York.
Nothing in it.

(Signed) JACK."

While King and Kitty were out driving that same evening Smythe came puffing up the hill for a conference with Saunders, which lasted till long past midnight.

So engrossed were the two men that they did not hear the return of the girl; in fact, her existence was forgotten, so earnestly were they discussing their affairs in the small room set apart as Colonel Tom's "den." Nor did either man note that the door was ajar.

As Kittie came through the house from the carriage drive, where she had said good night to the man who had become so disturbing a factor in her life, she passed by the door of the den and, hearing voices, paused, her attention attracted by the mention of her own name. In charity let it be assumed that she did not mean to listen, but listen she did, for an hour, while every phase of the sordid plot was outlined.

It was Smythe's raucous voice, hoarse with anger, which had first caught her ear. "You see," he was saying, "your scheme of making Kittie pull the chestnuts out of the fire, by drawing on this squirt of an expert, has not worked worth a cuss. While he was amusing himself with her he has been going through the Mother Lode with a fine-tooth comb, and he knows the property is not worth seven dollars, much less the seven hundred thousand we are asking for it."

"But," protested Saunders, "if the real value of the Mother Lode is so easily apparent, why should he hang on here for ten days and appear so keen in the work? Bixby tells me that he has fingered every inch of rock from one end of the workings to the other, not once, but a half dozen times."

"Lord! but you are easy," sneered the Secretary. "For a man who has turned as many doubtful tricks as you have, it strikes me that you are almighty soft all of a sudden. I tell you, your scheme never had any sense in it, and if we are to pull off the deal, my plan must be worked. That fellow, after amusing himself with Kitty for a few days, has finished his job and about tomorrow he'll skip. You'll see."

"How do you know that the telegram refers to

our deal? It doesn't mention the Mother Lode," persisted Saunders.

"What else can it mean?" demanded Smythe. "It's addressed to a man in care of the Syndicate, evidently an interested party, and it says 'Nothing in it.' What do you make of that? It's lucky I fixed that telegraph operator or we would not have known the lay as well as we do."

"Well, mebbe you're right," assented the elder man, after a pause. "What's the next move?"

"Buy him."

"How much do you propose to offer?"

"Enough to land him. One hundred thousand dollars, two hundred thousand, if necessary. Why, hang it, Tom, we might better give him three hundred thousand than to let the thing fall through. Suppose you offer him a twenty per cent rake-off as a starter?"

"Who, me?" demanded Saunders. "I couldn't do it."

"Couldn't do it? Why? What's the matter? I thought you wanted to handle this young cock of the woods."

"That's an awful lot of money to give away just for an opinion on a hole in the ground. Why not offer him five or ten thousand, Smythe?"

"And have him give you the laugh and put on virtuous airs about it? Not much. We are play-

ing for a stake, trying to sell a played-out mine, and if you are going to buy him, buy him good and hard. Make it so big that he can't refuse. Don't you see?"

"But that's a big chunk of money you're talking about," groaned the elder man.

"What do we care about that? It isn't our money we're giving away; it's the M. & M. people who are buying him, not us."

There was further remonstrance on the part of the president. "I can't afford to pay any such price, and I won't. Now, if he would accept a reasonable sum, say about——"

Smythe's fist smashed down upon the table. "You'll spoil the play, you infernal idiot! Now, listen to me. You'll do just as I tell you. Understand? You'll bring this duffer to the office at quarter-past twelve tomorrow, when everyone is away to dinner, and I'll do the talking. You are to keep your face closed and simply agree to anything I say. Sabe? I'm tired of your airs, you puffed-up fool. You will do as I say, if you know what is good for you. Do you catch me, Mr. Saunders?" There was menace in the words, as he shot them at the quailing man.

"All right, Smythe, all right; don't get mad about it," he whined.

"Get mad!" snorted Smythe, who was in a

fiendish temper; "your dilly dallying would drive a cigar store Indian to strong drink. You haven't as much backbone as an angle worm. As I said before, I'll handle this thing myself."

There was more talk in lower tones, but the girl heard it not. White-faced and wide-eyed, she had fled to her room, to live with this horrid, reek-ink thing through the remainder of the night. At last she understood why her uncle had so slyly, yet so persistently, urged her to show Mr. King so great hospitality; had thrown them together upon every possible occasion. She the bait! the lure! She had all along felt an indefinable, intangible something which had made her ill at ease with the young engineer, and now she *knew*. Could he suspect that she had been the decoy?

For an hour she raged in an agony of tearful anger. Twice she started up to face and denounce her uncle for having used her for so despicable a purpose, and twice she sank back upon the couch in wretched indecision. Presently she grew calmer and began a more logical and dispassionate survey of the situation. She went back to her first meeting with King in the stage coach, and hour by hour she lived over again the succeeding days. She remembered the unspoken love which smouldered constantly in his eyes, and she felt that one word from her would cause it to glow

into the flame eternal. Yes, Jack loved her, of that she was sure; and in this midnight hour of shame and outraged dignity she learned yet another thing, which, putting aside the anger and the tears, brought to her innermost soul that which was infinitely sweet and beautiful. She loved Jack! Aye, and she would love him forever and a day. For was not he the brave knight, the untarnished one of whom she had dreamed through all her girlhood? And these loathsome plotters would sully his manhood with pitfalls and with bribes! It should not be; she would warn him of the snare. Ah! But what need had he of warning? They could not bribe him, her King. He would meet their overtures with the scorn they deserved. No, she would wait till he had flung their vile offer back into their teeth, and then she would go to him and tell him all that she had known and of her faith in him before the trial.

But perhaps Jack would learn the part which she had unsuspectingly been made to play and would despise her as a fitting accomplice for Smythe and her uncle? The thought was intolerable and she writhed under the humiliation which might come to her through this man who had so suddenly become the axis about which her world revolved. Thus it was that Kittie found torture in this first trial of her new-born love.

As King passed through the hotel office next morning the landlord handed him a letter bearing the local postmark. It was misspelled and badly written, but the sense was plain.

“King of Calaveras.

i ain't holdin' no grudge against you fer the jolt in the neck that putt me out of busyness. i ain't that kind. i beleev you air on the level, and i sed to myself i would do you a good turn if i ever had the chanst, and now i got the chanst. them mother Loders air playin' to skin you and your bosses. thay no the pay ore is plade out and the mine ain't wuth a pipeful of nigger wool terbacker, so thay air goin' to sell it to you all and then jump the game. thay bin workin' you all the time and that gurl is in it and she was told to play you soft and git you stuck on her if she cood, and she done it. She made a munky of you. if she coodent turn the trick thay air goin' to by you boddy and soul. You kin sell if you want to. It ain't enny of my busyness, but i am givin' it to you strate, and you kin sell fer a good figger. they fixed it with the gurl and she is into it up to her neck. Sumway i don't beleev you air that kind of a cat, but you kin sell fer a good figger. That gurl is a slick dealer and she is playin' you fer a sucker. Smythe is a plane thief. the old man is both the uthers into one. i got it strate and now you got it strate. i got a hole lot of respeek fer you becoz you nocked hell out me and becoz you look a man plum square in the face.

Yore frend,

L. SMITH.

P. S.—You can sell fer a good figger.”

After studying the missive carefully, King ate his breakfast in moody silence, and at once started for the mine, his face wearing a look of annoyed perplexity. The charge against Kitty he dismissed as unworthy of consideration. Nor

could he reasonably give credence to the charge that Smythe and Saunders meant to offer him a bribe, as he had not in any manner discussed with them the financial features of the deal, nor could they have any idea as to the nature of his forthcoming report on the property. He had expressed no opinion as to its value and it would be ridiculous in them to attempt bribery under such circumstances. And yet, the outlaw's letter had specifically outlined the plan by which he was to be entrapped and, for some unaccountable reason, he believed that Smith's letter was a sincere and well meant warning. Doubtless the man was wholly mistaken, yet somehow the letter rang true, and it bothered the young engineer in the final summing up of his examination, which he was that morning to complete.

Two or three times during the morning he found himself dwelling upon the words "that gurl is in it and she was told to play you soft," and as many times he put the thought angrily aside, calling himself a contemptible fool for permitting the vaporings of an ignorant desperado to shake his faith in the only woman he had ever wanted for his wife.

As he emerged from the shafthouse at noon time the engineer called to him that he was wanted at the office. Entering, he found Saunders and

Smythe awaiting him. The latter pushed forward a chair.

"Sit down, Mr. King," he said, "we want to talk things over with you for a few minutes."

Without a word, King seated himself, every faculty alert with suspicion, his mind instantly reverting to the letter of Lonesome Smith in his pocket.

"Having finished your examination of our property and made your report," resumed Smythe, "we want to go into this thing with you before you leave."

"Made my report? Will you be good enough to explain how you arrived at the conclusion that I have completed my examination or that I have reported upon the matter? I certainly have given you no such information," responded the engineer, eyeing both men with increased suspicion.

"Well, er, you see, Mr. King," began Saunders, with a deprecatory shrug, "while we have no positive knowledge of your attitude, we were under the impression that your report to the M. & M. people might not be wholly favorable and ——"

"Oh, cut it, and let's get down to brass tacks," broke in Smythe. "We know that you have turned down the proposition, and what we want to know is, will you, for a consideration, report

favorably and advise the purchase? If so, we are prepared to offer a substantial sum."

As King's only reply was a blank stare, the Secretary continued: "You are a young fellow who is in business to make money, and, as I take it, you are wholly dependent upon the fees you receive for making expert examination of mining properties. You can make more money out of this transaction than you could accumulate in years of such service, and we offer you the chance to feather your nest. What do you say?"

There was no reply from the young man, but in his eyes Smythe saw something which caused that individual to shift his seat to another chair, which move placed the desk between King and himself.

"It's done every day, and in every class of business," pursued Smythe. "Talented men, possessing special or technical knowledge, are sent out to pass upon propositions involving millions, and yet these men, whose brains decide these big questions, are paid salaries or fees not much in excess of head waiters at good hotels. Nobody blames them if they occasionally reach out and grab off a slice of the pie. Now, we are offering you a good thing, King, and if you are smart you will take it. Our price on the Mother Lode property is seven hundred thousand dollars. If you

will report favorably and the deal goes through we will pay you twenty per cent. on the purchase price."

During this harangue King's eyes, which had been boring holes through Smythe, took on a new light of inquiry.

"I understood you to say that my report had already gone in; also that it was unfavorable. How do you propose that I consistently revise it?"

"Oh, that's up to you," replied Smythe. "You can say that the telegram was garbled, or forged, or you can even disclaim all knowledge of it."

"What telegram?" demanded King.

"The telegram you sent last night," replied the secretary, flushing angrily as he realized that he had disclosed his source of information.

"So you bought the telegraph operator, just as you are now trying to buy me?"

"Well, business is business," went on Smythe, "and I generally know what is going on. Now, what do you say to our proposition?"

But the young engineer made no reply. He seemed deeply immersed in thought and, as minute after minute went by in silence, he appeared to have forgotten the existence of the other men.

Smythe's fingers drummed impatiently on the desk, as he waited.

"Well," he finally broke out, "it takes you a long time to accept or decline a fortune. One hundred and forty thousand dollars is a lot of money. Most men would jump at such an opportunity."

"Most men, perhaps," responded King, absently, his gaze still fixed on vacancy and his mind apparently engrossed with some knotty problem.

"I suppose you would have us believe that you are rather more virtuous than most men," sneered the secretary, his personal dislike creeping out.

Again into King's eyes flitted the flinty look, and again it caused Smythe some uneasiness, for King's glare plainly indicated a strong desire to get those lean, brown hands upon the puffy throat opposite.

"You have offered me twenty per cent.," he finally said, and the words were fairly fired at Smythe. "Is that your last word? If not, let's have it."

"No, it isn't," replied the briber, with more confidence. "We will give you two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to close the deal."

A dismal groan from the president caused King to turn upon him.

"You don't seem to approve of your secretary's offer, Mr. Saunders. Is this negotiation being conducted with your assent, or otherwise?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," hastily replied Saunders. "Anything which Mr. Smythe proposes has my full approval, but it's a lot of money."

"It is not too late to recall the offer, Mr. Saunders, and I haven't said that I would accept."

"The offer goes," insisted Smythe; "you heard Saunders say that he would back up anything that I may do. Now, let's get down to cases. Do you accept?"

"Will you put the proposition in writing?" inquired King.

Again Saunders interrupted. "Now, really, Mr. King, that would be unnecessary. This is a private understanding between gentlemen and no written memorandum is needed. You have our word of honor that our part of the agreement will be carried out to the letter."

"Your word of honor, as you call it, is worth no more than a last year's bird nest. Will you put it in writing, or will you not?" retorted the engineer, grimly.

"Yes, we will put it in writing, if you will give us a corresponding memorandum agreeing to carry out your part of the deal," assented Smythe, after a pause.

King turned on him another icy stare, as he replied, "I will write nothing, sign nothing. If any arrangement is made, you will take my word for

everything. I will accept your word for nothing."

"You don't trust us?" bawled Saunders, with a fine show of virtuous indignation.

"Not a second, as to time, nor the sixteenth of an inch, as to distance," retorted King, as he looked at his watch.

Without a word, Smythe took a sheet of paper and began writing rapidly. Having finished, he handed the paper to the representative of the M. & M. Syndicate, who read it carefully, after which he passed it over to Saunders, who merely glanced it through and nodded.

"Sign it, both of you," demanded King. Both signed, after which he placed it in his pocket-book.

Then rising, he said briefly, "I think I am safe in saying that the Syndicate will take over the Mother Lode property. You will have your title deeds and all other papers pertaining to the transfer at the Bank of California within ten days. Search of title will require one week. One month from this date the transaction can be closed, transfer made and money paid over to you at the bank in San Francisco. Satisfactory?"

Both men nodded.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," and with no further word, the engineer started for the

village, his brain in a whirl as he reviewed the rapidity with which events had moved within the past half hour. Once he stopped in the road to again read Lonesome Smith's letter.

Ten minutes later Colonel Tom Saunders bustled noisily into his home, calling loudly for his niece.

"Hurry down, Kit. I'm late for dinner and devilish hungry. Hurry, I've something to tell you."

Pale, disheveled and haggard after a sleepless night, the girl made her appearance.

"Good God, Kittie! You look like a ghost. Are you ill? Say!" he demanded, abruptly, "are you bothering your head over that King fellow? If so, cut it out. We are about through with that chap. The mine is sold, at least the preliminaries are all arranged, and we will leave these diggings in a few days. What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

She reeled as with a sudden faintness, then gasped. "You sold the mine to Mr. King?"

"Yes," answered the uncle, jubilantly, "and a mighty lucky thing it is for us, too."

"And he took the bribe?" she faltered.

"What do you mean? What do you know about bribes?" he demanded.

"I heard you last night. I didn't mean to lis-

ten, but the door was open and I heard it all. Oh, I can't believe that he was low enough to accept your vile offer. I won't believe it; I will tell him of your plot; tell him the Mother Lode is worthless and that his company is being robbed. I'll tell him how——”

“You'll tell him nothing, you little fool,” he said, seizing her arm and shaking her roughly; “d'ye hear? Don't you suppose he knows all about the mine without any information from you? The cussed thief held us up for an awful lot of money, but we'll get out of it with a pretty snug sum, anyway. And you are to drop him and keep your mouth shut; that's what you will do. I don't want any more heroies, understand?” and again he shook her roughly.

With sudden strength she flung off his hands, and her eyes were blazing as she faced him defiantly. “He may be a thief, but I don't believe it yet. I know you are one, and I will no longer consent to live under your roof. You have some money of mine in your care. Give it to me and I will trouble you no further.”

“I'll give you the money when I get good and ready,” he laughed contemptuously. “You haven't the scratch of a pen to show that I owe you a dollar. I have certain plans for your future, young lady. You know what they are. If

you follow them I'll take care of you; otherwise you will not get a cent."

"Do you mean Smythe?" she demanded.

"Yes, I mean Smythe."

"I'll starve before I'll marry him," she declared vehemently.

"All right, all right!" responded the uncle indifferently. "You have your choice, lady-bird, but you'll find starving devilish uncomfortable work. Now, I have had all the nonsense I want for one day. I'm going to eat."

With white, set face Kittie left Mr. Saunders to the undisturbed enjoyment of his dinner. When she had reached the refuge of her room all her courage and defiance gave way. With a piteous cry she flung herself face downward on the bed in a tempest of weeping. She was adrift. Her anchor of belief in men and things was gone. The new idol which she had raised up was shattered in this chaos of fraud, chicanery and deceit. Jack, her King, who had seemed to her all that was clean-souled and honorable, was a miserable cheat, a thief, just as her uncle had stated. She no longer attempted to deceive herself. Jack was guilty. Saunders' evident elation over the successful outcome of the bribery plot was proof more subtle, more damning than the mere words he had used. She had heard the whole wretched

business outlined the previous night, Jack's telegram, the tremendous bribe which he was to be offered; yes, she had evidence enough that he had surrendered his manhood, his honor, for money. And she loved him! Were there no honest men, no decency in the world? What was to become of her? She could no longer remain under the protection of her uncle. Protection! She wept bitterly as the bare travesty of the term occurred to her. She knew that, if possible, he would coerce her into marriage with Smythe, and that his threat concerning her money was no idle one. What was she to do? Her purse contained fifty dollars, or less, enough, perhaps, to take her to San Francisco, but she dared not look beyond that. Exhausted, heart sore and utterly unhappy, she tossed for hours, seeking in vain for some solution of her trouble, till nature intervened and she slept as a tired child.

In the meantime, at his room in the little hotel, Mr. John Calvin King was having a most interesting session with himself. His usually impassive face bore a look of strained perplexity and his brows were drawn into an ugly frown as he mentally recapitulated the events of the previous twenty-four hours. For the fourth time he studied each word of Lonesome's uncouth communication. "Strange," he muttered to himself, "how

closely he has hit it off thus far. I wonder if it be possible that he is right regarding the other thing. Hell, no! I can't believe it! Kittie is not that sort, and no matter how great a scoundrel her precious uncle may be, I'll back my life that she is not a partner in his dirty schemes." For a time his faith in her would stand unshaken, till presently another doubt would slip its leash to gnaw and trouble him. The bandit had in some manner obtained positive and absolute knowledge of Symthe's and Saunders' secret plans. Might he not be equally correct as to her part? The thought drove him to his feet, to pace impatiently up and down the small room.

For the first time in his life he loved a woman, and in his soul he had erected a sanctuary fitted for a being of purity and truth, as he believed her to be. Was he to find her unworthy? While he had not uttered the words which had so often trembled upon his lips, surely she had known of the adoration which had thrilled him when in her presence. Ah, yes, she knew. And more than once he had seen shining in her eyes a message which had seemed to say that his wooing would not be in vain. Did she love him, or was she merely a consummate actress playing a part written for her by those two rogues? Well, he would see her that evening and learn from her own lips

whether she be true or false. If she were still the woman of his dreams he would take her away from that atmosphere of duplicity and she should be his through all the wide, bright reaches of the future.

This determination reached, he applied himself to the writing of a bulky letter, with which was enclosed a copy of the Saunders-Smythe proposition to him. This letter he was careful to send by registered mail, after which he was free to pack his few belongings in preparation for the outgoing stage trip of the morrow.

The east wind, redolent of fir and balsam, was whispering its evening benediction through the tree tops as King made his way toward the house upon the hill. Over the land was hovering the stillness, the quiet hush which comes at close of day, bespeaking for all things animate a season of rest and sleep. The sun, sinking slowly in a blazing sea of gold and azure, had sent his parting touch to gild and illumine the chaste, white summit of the high Sierras till they shone torch-like in the tender blue of the eastern sky, a parting promise from the day god that he would come to wake them on the morrow. Something of the peace and benediction of the scene touched the young man as he strode along the upward path, causing him to halt and with uncovered head

drink deep of the wonders prepared for those mortals who may see and understand. How beautiful it was, this hill world—her world, where he had first drained the cup which lifts men to the plane of gods.

As he passed the gable in which he knew Kittie's room was located, he glanced upward at the open window, where he caught a fleeting glimpse of her face. He paused an instant for the greeting which she had upon more than one occasion waved to him, but no signal of welcome was forthcoming. That she had seen him he felt assured, in fact, he was certain that she had watched his approach. Somewhat disconcerted, he proceeded to the door and rang.

When the Chinese servant appeared, instead of ushering him in with the usual salaam, he now opened the door but a few inches and stared in silence.

"Say to Miss Kittie that I am here," directed King.

"No can see," returned the Chinaman.

"What's that?" demanded the young man, incredulously.

"No can see," repeated the Celestial. "Missy Kit go walkee."

Furious at this palpable affront, King lost his

head for a moment. "Where's Saunders?" he asked angrily.

"No can see. Conal go buggy lide," was the impassive reply.

Turning, King walked rapidly away, hot wrath in his heart. A glimpse of Smythe's face at the window as he passed completing his humiliation.

In blind, unreasoning anger he returned by the same path, through the same world which ten minutes previously had appeared to him so beautiful, now a barren waste of ruin and disappointment.

So this was the end! Lonesome Smith was right. She was part and parcel of the scheme, and had lured him by the promise in her eyes till he had served her end, and, having served, was contemptuously turned away. What a fool! What a blind, silly, lovesick fool he had been! Lovesick? That was worst of all. He had loved her and she had toyed with him, used him, and now she laughed at and spat upon the most sacred thing he had ever known. God! how he hated her! How he would like to strip that vile soul of her's to the gaze of men, to humble her pride and stamp it under his feet, to make her suffer as he was suffering, and then to gloat over and taunt her in her shame. Almost, he wanted to break

her in his hands, to mar her beauty, to beat her as did the primeval man beat the woman who played him false.

For hours he hurried aimlessly about the mountain roads through paths and by-ways which she had shown him, thus unconsciously adding fuel to the flame which seared the innermost recesses of his being. At each familiar rock or tree he flung a curse, and with each curse consigned her further to the deep damnation of his hate. Alone in the hills he fought it out, the better man winning.

As he took his place in the stage next morning Mr. King presented his usual appearance, save that his eyes had lost something of their smiling good humor and the lines about his mouth had grown a bit deeper and more determined.

The month passed, as months have a habit of doing, without seismic or other disturbance of sufficient moment to engage the attention of casual observers, though within the period were several occurrences worthy of mention in this chronicle, and may now be briefly related.

For several days Miss Saunders kept to the privacy of her own room, refusing communication with all save the Chinese servant, who was abjectly devoted to her. One day, a week after King's departure, she walked down to the village

and sought an interview with the telegraph operator. As no other party was present, the details of their conversation cannot be stated. Let it suffice that she emerged from the dingy office bearing a slip of paper upon which appeared an address which she coveted.

Three days later she requested the use of Mr. Saunders' team for a drive, which courtesy was promptly extended by that kindly gentleman, who gleefully assured Smythe that this was the first overture of final surrender and indulged in the sage prophecy that within a week she would be "feeding at the regular trough" and in full possession of her senses.

Late that evening the team was driven back by a man, with the information that the young lady with her bundles and boxes had overtaken and boarded the stage and was doubtless now on the railway en route to her destination. Saunders and Smythe in panic set the wires at work, but so cleverly had she covered the trail they could learn nothing of her.

A few days after this comes another incident worthy of record.

Since his departure from B—— King had been in San Francisco and in constant communication with the Syndicate. Moody and abstracted, he was one evening walking along Market street

when he was overtaken by a boy who inquired if he were Mr. King. Upon receiving an affirmative nod, the urchin thrust a crumpled bit of paper into King's hand, flitting around a corner before the surprised man could ask a question. Under a street lamp King unfolded the paper, a soiled envelope which contained the following letter:

"King of Calaveras.

The deel went threw, so i reckon they bot you all rite. i hope you got a good figger. i was rong about that gurl. She wassent in it. She giv them fellers hell and woodent speak to both of them fer a week. then she run Away and i no whare she is. did you fuss with her becoz i sed she was in it? if you did you want to call it Off and begin over agin if you want her. She was agin them, but you dident no It ner me ncether. Thay haint found her, but i no whare she is. she is rite here in Frisco.

Yores truly,

LONESOME SMITH.

P. S.—i hope you got a good figger."

King's first impulse was to toss the paper into the gutter, the sore was too recent and too deep to be reopened. He wanted no more of it. And yet—his heart gave a great throb of joy as he repeated the words, "She was against them, but you didn't know it."

Was this some trick to entice him again into her net? No, this letter was unquestionably from Smith, and, like the former one, it rang true. But, if she had been against her uncle and Smythe, why had she refused to see him? And she was here, in San Francisco! Would he see her?

Again his heart beat quicker, as the thought came to him. Was the bandit here, also? What should he do? What a devil of a mess it all was, any how!

Again Mr. John Calvin King walked somewhat late, and, though he viewed the problem from many angles, he could not unravel it. Had he known where to find the girl, it may be that, after the manner of his kind, he would have gone to her that night, but as it was, he must wait.

On September twenty-fifth, the date fixed for the transfer of the mine, King, with his attorney, met the president and secretary of the Mother Lode Company at the bank, where the usual formalities of such deals were carefully observed. The Syndicate's attorney stated that he had found the title sound and that Mr. King, the duly authorized agent of his clients, was prepared to pay over the purchase price in the shape of a certified check for four hundred and fifty thousand dollars and a promissory demand note for the residue of two hundred and fifty thousand. When the lawyer had proceeded thus far with the negotiations King interrupted.

"Mr. Wilson," he said, addressing the attorney, "as you have looked into and passed upon the legal phases of this transaction, I will ask that you now retire and permit me to conclude

the matter with these men. I have something of a private nature to say to them and for good and sufficient reasons would prefer to have you step into the next room, where I will join you in a few minutes."

Much surprised, the attorney hesitated for a moment and then retired.

"Now," resumed the young man crisply, "we will finish this thing."

Taking from his pocket two slips of paper, he pushed one across the table to Saunders. "Endorse this note with your signature, as President of the Mother Lode Company, making it payable to bearer."

Saunders studied the paper closely. "Why should I endorse it now?" he asked.

"There are two excellent reasons," remarked King dryly. First, because I tell you to do it; secondly, until you have endorsed and returned it to me, you will never get this certified check. Is that plain?"

"But how are you going to get your rake-off? You wouldn't dare to collect this note yourself."

"Oh! endorse it, endorse it," cried Smythe, "you couldn't see a thing if it was hung on the end of your nose. He will collect the note through some outside bank. He's slick enough for that."

When Saunders had written the required endorsement he passed the note over to King, who placed the check upon the table, his hand still upon it.

"Now, put those deeds alongside the check, and we will exchange," he said sharply.

As the exchange was made Saunders, his lips pursed, declared with an injured air, "Notwithstanding our efforts to conduct this entire affair in a gentlemanly and honorable manner, I fear you still mistrust us, Mr. King."

"You are a mind reader, Saunders," quietly replied the engineer, pocketing the papers, adding firmly, "This ends all relations between us."

"Not yet," called out Smythe, rising. "We have got our dough, but before you are through with me you have got to tell me what you have done with Kittie. Where is she?"

During the half hour consumed by the business in hand he had scarcely spoken, but had squirmed uneasily in his chair, following the younger man with hungry, malevolent eyes.

"Where is she?" he repeated threateningly.

King regarded him coldly, making no reply. Once more the question was repeated, the enraged secretary advancing till he stood almost over the man sitting so impassively.

King reached into his pocket for a cigar, which

he lighted with great deliberation, took a few puffs and then answered unperturbably, "None of your damned business."

"Well, I'll make it my business," cried Smythe, dancing about King's chair. "I'll fix you! I'll have you skinned and your hide tanned before I get through with you. I'll have you watched, and I'll find her, too."

"You will stub your toe and fall down, if you are not very careful, Smythe," cheerfully predicted the young man, as he unceremoniously pushed the secretary aside and left the room.

He had verified at least one of the statements in Lonesome's letter. Kittie was in hiding from these men. Were the other assertions of the outlaw equally reliable? Was Kittie innocent and had he cruelly misjudged her? But, if innocent, why had she refused to see him that last evening at B——? For the first time in his life Jack King was yearning to cultivate close acquaintance with a law-breaker. He wanted to see or hear further from Lonesome Smith. But that once ubiquitous citizen seemed to have effaced himself completely.

Fretting and impatient, King wandered aimlessly about the streets, vaguely hoping that he might by mere chance see the young lady who had again become the dominant factor in his life.

For two days he met only with disappointment—then something happened.

In order to insure the safe delivery of his letters and documents which were coming to him from time to time, he had secured a private box at the post-office, and it was his custom to visit the box each evening after all the eastern mails had arrived.

On the evening of his second day's search for Kittie Saunders he made his usual pilgrimage to the post-office, found one letter in the box, which he noted bore the writing of his friend and business associate, Billy Gregg. Placing the letter in his pocket for later perusal, he turned toward the exit and almost collided with a lady who had just left the general delivery window. It was Kittie. She flushed violently as she recognized the man before her and, in sudden agitation, dropped from her hand a letter which she had evidently just received. He recovered the letter and waited for her to speak, but flashing at him a look which he interpreted to mean anger or contempt, or both, she stepped aside and would have passed him.

“One moment, Miss Saunders. May I have a word with you?” King's even and respectful tone belied the hot resentment with which he received the cut direct from this slip of a girl, but

with his usual singleness of purpose, having found her, he now proposed to have speech with her and settle once for all the problem which for a month had racked his soul.

She hesitated only long enough to respond icily, "I know of nothing which you might say that could in the slightest degree interest me."

"That is altogether possible," he assented, falling into step with her as she moved toward the exit, "but as you appear to be a more or less difficult young lady to locate and as the thing I have to say is of some importance, to myself at least, I propose to make use of this opportunity."

They had now emerged from the building and he turned with her up the street. Her chin was high in the air and she was looking straight ahead as if unconscious of his presence. Undaunted, he continued:

"During the fortnight in which we were so constantly thrown together I formed the highest possible estimate of your character and believed you incapable of a mean or false action."

A disdainful sniff was the only reply vouchsafed him.

"I confess," he went on, "that I have during the past month doubted the wisdom of my original estimate—in fact, I was at one time quite convinced that my earlier appraisal was wholly

at fault. A letter which I recently received has caused me to wonder if I have not done you a great injustice in my later conclusions. This will in part explain why I am now forcing my presence upon you. As you have learned, I am a man of plain speech. I want to ask you a few questions, which will determine whether you are a very ordinary, unscrupulous and mercenary young woman, or the angel I once pictured you. Why did you refuse to receive me that last evening?"

She stopped short, then found words in a veritable torrent of indignation.

"You impertinent thing," she shrilled. "You dare charge me with being unscrupulous or mercenary? You? *You*? And you want plain speech between us? You shall have it. You ask why I refused to receive you that last evening at Mr. Saunders' home? I'll tell you why. I had learned that you were a dishonest man; a man who had entered into a plan to rob his employers; a bribe taker; a thief! That's why I wouldn't see you. I do not receive people of your class, Mr. John Calvin King. Have I spoken plainly enough?"

"So they told you the bribery story, did they?" he asked, and his voice had lost its fire and hardness.

"No," she retorted; "I overheard the plot as

arranged by Mr. Smythe and my uncle the night after you sent the telegram to Mr. Gregg. I learned that they proposed to bribe you. At first I thought of warning you, and then it occurred to me that an honorable person would require no warning. I believed in you. How hideously I had mistaken your caliber. And I once called you a Man."

Her voice, vibrant with something which rose above her passion, broke a little as she finished and turned to leave him. One long stride brought him to her side.

"Kittie!" there was a wondrous caressing tenderness in his tone. "Kittie!" he said again, his hand seeking hers.

"Don't touch me!" she flamed. "Don't speak to me again! I despise you!"

"But you must hear me, little girl. We have both made the mistake of condemning the other unheard. Listen to me," he urged, as she continued on her way. "In this land of ours is a thing called Law, and the very foundation of that law is another thing called Justice, which distinctly pronounces that every accused person shall have the right to be heard in his or her own defense. I came to you to hear from your own lips the justification against the charges which painted you in such unenviable colors. You are

refusing to hear my story. This is an injustice to me."

"But what defense can you have?" she panted. "They bribed you, didn't they?"

"Well, something like that," he admitted.

"And you took the money?"

"No, I took no money," was his enigmatical reply.

"I don't understand. What do you mean?" and again she paused in the street.

"It is a long story and the street is no place to make you understand it all. Let me go with you to your hotel, where I will explain everything."

"I am not living at a hotel. I am staying at a miserable, cheap boarding house."

"Then I will accompany you there," he declared, as they resumed their progress along the street. As she gave neither assent nor objection to this proposition, he continued to walk beside her a few blocks further, where she indicated a car which traversed the Mission district.

During the ride her hostility of manner was in no wise relaxed, which plainly indicated that she was taking his protestations *cum grano salis*.

Leaving the car in the older quarter of the city, she led the way to a house of shabby genteel appearance, and to her apartment, which consisted of a tiny sitting room and bed chamber on the first

floor. Laying aside her hat and gloves, she addressed him coldly. "Mr. King, before I hear a word of what you have to say, I want to read the letter which I received this evening."

"Very good! and while you are so engaged I will, with your permission, read one of my own which came to me at the same time."

On opposite sides of the small table, upon which burned a lamp, the two silently read their respective epistles. Hers was the shorter, or perhaps she read more hurriedly, for when he glanced up she was looking at him and in her eyes shone something which he had never before found there. For a moment there was tense silence; then she faltered, "My—my letter is from Mr. Gregg."

"Mine also," he said, as if waiting for something more.

For a brief space her eyes clung to his, then dropping her face in her hands, she sobbed tumultuously.

Instantly he was beside her, that small person was lifted bodily in his arms and held close to his heart as he kissed, again and again, her lips, her eyes, her hair. In some manner not explained her arm slipped about his neck.

"Oh, Mr. Plain Jack, I've been such a beast."

"Never mind, sweetheart," he soothed; "I've been worse. We have all our lives in which to

make reparation for the injustice we have done each other, a lifetime which we will spend together. Do you understand?" The only reply he received was a closer pressure from the encircling arm.

Presently, releasing herself from his embrace, she said, "I want you to read my letter from Mr. Gregg."

"Willingly, and you shall read mine," he assented.

The letter which she placed in his hands read as follows:

"Dear Miss Saunders:

Your letter reached this office during my absence from the city; hence the delayed reply. I hasten to acknowledge your kindly offices, to assure you that I have only the highest respect and admiration for the woman whose innate integrity and sense of honor impelled her to write that letter of warning to a member of the M. & M. Syndicate, an act which possibly meant the sacrifice of some personal interests. I doff my hat to you as a woman whom any honest man should be proud to claim as his friend.

You are, however, laboring under serious misapprehension regarding my friend, Jack King. He is of the salt of the earth, the very essence of honor, and I would entrust every dollar I possess to him for an indefinite period. He promptly apprised us of the bribery and his method of handling the matter has our entire approval. As a matter of fact, he is a member of the Syndicate and his own funds are invested in the venture. The mine is worth all that we are paying for it; much more, Jack thinks.

The telegram which brought about the attempt on the part of your uncle to bribe our representative had no reference to the business in hand; it concerned a matter purely personal. In

attempting to buy him they sold themselves; that's like Jack. He fooled them and will enjoy telling them so after the deeds are recorded, which has doubtless been done ere this.

But I fail to understand why he should have deceived you, and I am writing to tell him as much.

Thanking you, and with renewed assurances of my highest regard and esteem, I am,

Most sincerely,

WM. GREGG."

In the meantime, Mr. Gregg's letter to his friend King was being studied with greatest interest by the young woman.

"Dear Jack:

I have been on the ragged edge of writing to you for a month, ever since I got that wire from you, in fact, but I never seemed to get further than the edge of the necessary endeavor.

Now, however, something has come up which makes a letter to you an imperative duty, a pleasure, a pain, as well as other odds and ends too numerous to mention.

Say, son, who is Miss Kittie Saunders? Is she young and beautiful, or old and ugly? Anyhow, she is square—not necessarily angular, but square—which is an attribute more or less surprising in one who is in any manner connected with or related to that old Turk, her uncle. Do you know what she did, that fair young maid (or faded spinster, as the case may be)? She tried to bust the combine and spill the old man. Fact! She wrote me that our representative (that's you) was false to his trust and had permitted her uncle to bribe him into making a favorable report on the Mother Lode, when, as a matter of fact, it was not worth a damn (or words to that effect).

Now, what do you think of that? Doesn't it prove that the aforesaid Saunders female is square from foundation to belfry? By golly, I would like to know that girl, or maiden lady or grandma, whichever title fits her best! She is our sort, Jack, and how in blazes you overlooked such a bet I can't understand. I want you to shake hands with her for Bill Gregg. Will you do

it? And, if she is young enough and good-looker enough I want you to take her round to the preacher and marry her. Will you do that, too? Just say to her that I think she is good stuff inside and outside, also edgewise or any other old way, which will make her understand that I honor her as a good woman.

And now about that telegram. It seems to have raised particular hell at the Mother Lode, but it brought heaven down within grabbing distance for me. I really thought you were interested in Beatrice, and if so, I knew there wouldn't be any show for me, so I wrote you about it, man-fashion, as you like things. That telegram did the business. I went to her at once, and say, Jack, if it were not that you abhor sloppy weather, I certainly would gush. We are very happy and are to be married next spring. You are to be best man, of course.

Glad you think so well of the Mother Lode. If your predictions are borne out we will have dividends for breakfast every morning.

Say! What's this story about you holding up a hold-up man and being appointed King of the County, or something of the sort? I am of the opinion that the report has been garbled and that you have been elected as Coroner.

Write a fellow once in a while.

Yours,

BILL."

She was smiling happily as she finished the letter.

"Mr. Gregg writes a very fetching letter," she said, "and he has brought a great happiness to me; but there are two things I don't understand. Why did you pretend to be bribed, and what did that telegram refer to?"

"The telegram," he explained, "was in reply to Billy's letter. He was in love with a girl and he got a fool notion into his head that I was also interested in her, so he wrote me frankly and, to

relieve his mind, I wired, 'Nothing in it.' Smythe, who owned the telegraph operator, got a copy of the message and, assuming that it referred to the Mother Lode, set about bribing me in order to secure a favorable report and sell the mine which he and your uncle considered worked out and worthless. In my examination I discovered that they had worked away from the true vein and that their later development had been in a comparative barren zone. Learning the true value of the lode, I was prepared to close the purchase on the basis of seven hundred thousand dollars. When the scoundrels offered me two hundred and fifty thousand to help them sell a property which we would gladly have bought at the original figure, I had no scruples in accepting the bribe, thereby saving our corporation a quarter of a million and, at the same time, rewarding the rascality of Smythe and Saunders in a fitting manner. Is the explanation satisfactory, sweetheart?"

"Quite! But, oh, Plain Jack, I believed them; I thought you were a miserable bribe-taker, a thief, and I hated you. I wrote that letter to Mr. Gregg hoping you would be disgraced and punished. I want you to know how vile I have been, and—"

"Wait," he said, as he again swung the little lady clear of the floor, holding her close in his

arms; "you need tell me nothing; I understand it all, and you must know that I have been guilty of even greater disloyalty. I believed you to be a party to the bribery scheme and I cursed you as a depraved and wanton thing."

"I'm so glad," she sighed contentedly; "now the forgiving won't be all on one side."

"We will forget it all, little girl, and by this token let us wipe the slate clean." Then he kissed her again full upon the lips.

"That there may be no possibility of mistake, suppose you wipe it once more, Mr. Plain Jack?" she whispered.

NEXT CRISTMAS.

“Here are the November balances, Mr. Hungerford; it’s been a big month and this will be the best year the bank has ever had.”

“Thank you, Grinnell. I’ll look them over later. Yes, it has been a good year and our surplus will show a handsome increase in the January statement. The mines and smelters, as well as the railway, have all done well. By the way, Grinnell, how long have you been with me?”

“As bookkeeper, teller and cashier, nearly twenty years.”

“Um—twenty years! It’s a long time to look forward to, though it seems short to look back upon. Well, Grinnell, during those twenty years have you had any cause to complain of the treatment you have received at the hands of your employer?”

“No, sir, can’t say that I have; you have always treated me fairly, sir.”

“Just so. I’ve been thinking for a day or two that I would—but there is no hurry; it’s a matter that will keep. I wish you would see that the fore-

closure proceedings against the Continental mine are instituted tomorrow. I want that thing cleaned up. That's all this evening, Grinnell."

Wondering at his sudden dismissal, the old cashier bowed himself out, leaving William Hungerford alone in the private office of his bank. For a few moments he sat gazing vacantly through the window at the snow-clad mountains, beneath whose shadow nestled the bustling western city; then closing his desk he left the building by his private entrance and walked abstractedly down the street to his club, where he seated himself in his favorite chair and took up the evening paper.

But the news failed to interest Mr. Hungerford; even the financial items and the market report, which he invariably scanned so carefully, appeared positively stupid today. Mr. Hungerford was plainly discontented, as he threw the paper aside and buried himself in his own thoughts. For the hundredth time during the past two days he reviewed, step by step, his career during the past twenty-five or thirty years. It had been a marvelously successful career, so men said, for was not he the richest man in all the region? Mills and mines and factories were his, their golden stream filling his coffers to overflowing. During the financial disturbance and

panic a few years previous, Hungerford's bank had been a tower of strength in the community, saving from utter ruin many of his fellow townsmen. True, they had paid roundly for the service, but that was business. What was the good of having money, if one couldn't make it earn something?

It was an open secret that the governorship might have been his for the asking, and only last winter the machine leaders had hinted to him that, for certain considerations, he might aspire to the United States Senate.

Oh, yes! he had been successful enough in money matters and all that sort of thing; but today it seemed to him to be but poor compensation for the quarter century of grinding.

How well he remembered it all. The old home in the New Hampshire village, where dollars were few and ambitions were many. How his mother had scrimped and saved that he, her only child—her big, brave man, as she had lovingly dubbed him—might continue in high school till graduation; and then, after seeing her boy win the class honors, how she had clung to him and cried from sheer joy and pride. Then, like a black nightmare, had come the sudden and awful visit of the Grim Reaper, and in the unspeakable agony of his grief he had placed his last kiss on the white

brow ere they laid his mother away from him forever.

Nearly thirty years had passed since then, yet it all came back to him as though the years were but a group of yesterdays.

The old Class of '74! Yes, he could recall every name, and face and feature. There was Jack Horner, his chum, quarterback of the eleven, and the very best fellow on earth. And Tom Pickford—Big Pick, they called him—who played center and who was a veritable war horse in a scrimmage. And so on down the line; he could name every boy in the class,—aye, and every girl, too. There was Kate Danforth, who had gone in for poetry and all that sort of stuff. He had nearly quarreled with her because she stuck to it that Longfellow was a bigger man than General Grant:—the idea!

But Kate wasn't the only girl in the class; there must have been nearly twenty of them. Let's see: Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, the two Andersons made sixteen—seventeen, eighteen, and last in the count, but admittedly first in his heart, was Polly Emerson, the youngest, brightest, prettiest girl in the class. She was eighteen then; why, she must be nearly fifty now—that is, if she is living. Or, she might be married;—yes, of course, she doubtless *was* married—damn it!

He wondered why it was that every time he thought of Polly as the wife of another man it always gave his heart such a twist? He was an old fool! That's what he was. Yet, how could a fellow help feeling sore about a girl who had confessed her love for him, and had more than half promised to be his wife some day? But her father, the stern-featured old chap, who was the wealthiest man in the village, had aspired to greater things for his daughter than marrying this young buck who had never a penny to bless himself with. So the old man had frowned upon Billy Hungerford's visits to his daughter Polly, had finally called down the young pretender and bluntly told him that Polly was not for such as he; taunted him with his poverty, and bade him keep away. How his pride had arisen within him at the old man's brutal dismissal!

He had written Polly a letter that night, in which he called her father some hard names, and finished by asking her if she would wait for him till he had gone out into the world and won the fortune, which the old man deemed so necessary to the man who should wed her, etc.?

Ah! the sorrowful, tear-stained, little note he had received from her in reply. She couldn't allow him to speak so disrespectfully of her father, nor could she marry a man of whom her

father did not approve. Then she bade him good-bye and Godspeed in his quest for the Golden Sheaf.

He had shaken the village dust from his feet that night and turned his face toward the West, which had been his home during the thirty intervening years.

It had been hard, slow work at first, but one by one his ventures yielded their profits, and at the end of a decade success had come to him; and now he was rich, rich beyond the wildest of his boyhood dreams.

He wondered what Polly would say now, if she knew how thriftily he had garnered the sheaves. Bah! she was doubtless married, and the mother of a half dozen freckle-faced kids. She wouldn't care a rap whether he were poor or rich!

Many times during the past twenty years he had wanted to visit the scenes of his early youth, but each time some one of his enterprises had demanded his presence; so he had given up the trip, each time promising his heart that next Christmas he would surely go back to the old home; and so, one after another, the Christmas seasons had sped by and he never had gone.

Why not go this Christmas? By Jove! he believed he would.

It was only a day or two ago that he had over-

heard some of his club friends telling each other of the presents they were buying, and the plans they were making to bring joy to the hearts of their wives and children. And he, whom had he to love, or plan Christmas presents for? No one. Not a soul on earth cared particularly whether he lived or died. Peter, his old servant, might perhaps feel a bit sorry; but then Peter didn't count. If he should drop out tomorrow it would make something of a stir in the community, but that was because of his wealth and the large enterprises which he controlled; not because the people had any personal affection for the man. He wondered if, with all his wealth, he wasn't poorer than the porter down at the bank, whose six-year-old girl climbed upon the back of her father's chair, mussed his hair, and called him Popsey? Wouldn't it be fine if a fellow had a home, a real home, with a sweet faced wife and little folks? But—thunder and Mars! what a sentimental jackass he was making of himself by indulging in all this self-pity! It was all foolishness; pure tommyrot; but, all the same, he was going home to see the old boys and girls, as many as he could find of them, and he was going soon. By Jinks! he would start tomorrow, on the 3:30 Limited.

People had called him a hard man, a man who

had lived without sentiment and merely to make money. He guessed they had been about right in their estimate of him; but, anyway, he proposed having a little fun this Christmas, and they might call it sentiment or whatever they pleased. He would have Peter begin packing tonight, and he would go back home—yes, sir, back to old New Hampshire. Sentiment be blowed! He guessed he could take a vacation, if he cared to.

As William Hungerford, banker, reached this conclusion, he rose from his chair and sought the dining room, where he surprised the waiter with an order for a hurried meal.

He felt strangely happy and elated and was anxious to get to his bachelor apartments down the street, where he would set old Peter at the packing without delay.

This Christmas business must be pretty good stuff, after all, if it gave a fellow this sort of an appetite and made him feel as good as he was feeling right then.

Finishing his meal, he walked briskly to his quarters, where he electrified old Peter with a crisp order to pack his clothing in readiness for the eastbound Limited leaving next day.

“Pack your own stuff, too, Peter,” he added; “you’ll go along.”

“But, Mistah Hungaford, it jest nachully cain’t

be did. I hain't got yo close raidy for no such trip, suh."

"All right, Peter, the expressman will call for the trunks at 2:30 tomorrow; you will have till that time to get them ready."

"But, suh——"

"That will do, Peter. You are wasting time; better get at your packing."

"Yassir, yassir." And as the old man backed out of the room he might have been heard to mutter, "sump'n wrong wid that man, dey sholy is. I done bin his valley-de-sham for mos' twenty year, and he ain't never gone off wid er hop, skip an' er jump like dis befo'; dere's sump'n wrong, suah!"

Mr. Hungerford sat before his fire lost in pleasant anticipation of the coming trip. The world had suddenly taken on a more roseate hue and he felt just like doing something to make somebody happy. It had been a long time since such an impulse had come to him, and he wondered what old Grinnell would think if he knew that his chief was thinking of taking any step which could not be designated as strictly business, and along the lines of money making.

And that reminded him—Grinnell was getting old and he had determined to replace him with a younger cashier. He had been thinking of it

for several months, and now, at the end of the year, was the proper time to make the change. It would doubtless break up the old man pretty badly to lose his position. True, he had been a faithful employe; but business was business, and old Grinnell had been paid for his services, hadn't he? Hang Grinnell, anyway! why should he bother himself about the old cashier just now, when he wanted to think of the good times he meant to have hunting up the old crowd, the class of '74, when he got back yonder in New Hampshire?

But the patient, studious face of the old cashier appeared to haunt him that evening and, try as he would, he seemed to be unable to keep Grinnell out of his reveries. By eleven o'clock Grinnell was the whole thing.

Mr. Hungerford wondered why it was that he, Hungerford, man of affairs, who had employed and discharged thousands of men, should allow so simple a thing as a change of cashiers in his bank so to disturb him. Grinnell had been a first-class man, no discount on that; but he was getting on in years, and it doubtless would be good business to put a younger man in his place.

Again in fancy Mr. Hungerford lived over the years of his career, and, as he reviewed the successive steps by which he had gained the ascend-

ency, he remembered that patient, plodding, faithful old Grinnell had ever been at his elbow, suggesting, aiding and safeguarding the interests of his employer.

As he mused, the brow of William Hungerford gradually cleared, and a kindlier look had come to the stern, clear-cut features when, as the clock on the City Hall clanged the high noon of the night, he chuckled softly as he said to himself, "I'll do it; it's Christmas times, anyhow."

Having settled the problem, he went to bed in high good humor with the world at large, and with himself in particular.

At the bank next morning Mr. Hungerford announced that he was about to take a holiday vacation, and would leave that afternoon for a month's absence. Then he called the old cashier into his private office.

"Grinnell," he said, "you will remember that I yesterday asked you how long you had been with me, and if you were content with the treatment you have received. I believe you expressed yourself as satisfied. You have worked hard, but you have been paid for it, and that's business. I called you in here to tell you that I have decided to make some changes in the bank's working force. You are getting on in years and the work is getting too heavy for you. We need a younger man,

so I will ask you for your resignation and will elevate Wilson to the cashiership."

"But—er—this is very sudden, sir," faltered the old man; "do I understand that you let me out after all these years?"

"I mean to say, Grinnell, that after today you will no longer be cashier of this bank."

"I am an old man, too old to seek new employment, and I have very little money saved up. Our home is about all we have. I don't know how I am to tell Mrs. Grinnell; I think it will break her heart, sir."

Even-voiced and calm, Mr. Hungerford eyed the older man.

"You know me pretty well, Grinnell; know that when I decide upon a move, I carry it through. Your term of service as cashier of this bank ends today."

Turning to the bell, he rang sharply.

"Send Mr. Wilson in," he said to the messenger.

The assistant cashier appeared a moment later. "Take a chair, Wilson, I want to say a few things to you."

The old man sat at the table, his head bowed in his arms, and as the young assistant took his seat he looked inquiringly at the bowed figure and then turned to Mr. Hungerford.

“Wilson,” resumed the President, “I have just had a talk with Mr. Grinnell. I’ve explained to him that, owing to his advanced years, I have determined to dispense with his services as the cashier of this bank. You are next in line, and at twelve o’clock today you will check up with him, take over the combination of the inner vault, and enter upon your duties as cashier.”

A look of pleasure and gratified ambition flashed over the young assistant’s face, as he hastened to thank his superior. Then, as his glance once more rested upon the motionless white head bowed upon the table, he hesitated, then paused midway in his expression of gratitude. “But, er, how about Mr. Grinnell? Is he—do you mean to——”

“I mean just what I say,” interrupted Mr. Hungerford; Mr. Grinnell’s term of service as cashier ends at twelve o’clock today, and yours begins at the same hour. Do you accept?”

“Oh, certainly, sir, but I hope——”

Again the president interrupted. “Then you will kindly return to your desk, Mr. Wilson, and for the next thirty minutes I do not care to be disturbed.” Without a word the younger man left the room.

As Mr. Hungerford turned from the door he

moved to the table, where long and silently he regarded the bowed figure of the old cashier; and as he looked a strange new light stole into his eyes and illumined his face, till few men would have recognized in this smiling, eager-faced man the usually impassive and stern-featured president of Hungerford's Bank.

Leaning forward, Mr. Hungerford placed his hand upon the other's shoulder. "Grinnell," he said softly. There was no answer, and the face was still hidden in the thin old arms. Mr. Hungerford's hand shifted to the further shoulder, till his arm lay gently, almost tenderly, about the bent figure. "Grinnell," he said again, and his voice broke a bit; "you are a chump, a dear old chump! Did you imagine that I would let you leave the ship, or that I would attempt to navigate the old craft without you? Did you think I would let you go after all these years of faithful service in helping me to build up a fortune? You ought to have known me well enough to understand that I never let go of a good thing. It is true that you are no longer cashier; the work is too hard for you; but from twelve o'clock today you will be the vice-president of Hungerford's Bank, at double your present salary. Mrs. Grinnell once told me that you and she were greatly interested in the ancient civilization of Mexico.

Well, I am running away for a few weeks' vacation, but upon my return you are to tuck your wife under your arm and start for a three months' outing in Aztec land; and, Grinnell, I desire that your last act in your present official capacity shall be to draw a cashier's check for \$5,000, which you will charge to my private account, and then I want you to take that check home to Mrs. Grinnell and tell her it is a Christmas present from Bill Hungerford to herself and her husband, and that they are to spend every cussed cent of it in having a bully good time on that vacation, and getting for her a pony and phaeton, or some other little tricks that she can think of. Christmas is coming, Grinnell, and I feel as happy as a boy at a circus. Look up, you old sinner, look up and laugh with me!"

The aged head was lifted and through tear-dimmed eyes the old man studied wonderingly his employer's face. But they were tears of joy and gratitude now. The black shadow of penurious old age had slipped away, and the courage of new hopes shone in his face as he strove to speak. Again the twitching lips framed the words of gladness with which his honest old heart was bursting, but no sound came forth. Then his hand sought that of Mr. Hungerford and, gripping it hard, he sent the message. No word was spoken,

yet as they stood there, hand clasping hand, looking deep into each other's souls, they saw and remembered and understood. It was enough.

When the old man had left the room Mr. Hungerford established another precedent. He executed something very like a Highland Fling, kicked over a waste basket, and then, flinging his big body into a chair, put his feet on his desk and lighting a huge cigar, slapped his leg and laughed a great, full-chested, able-bodied laugh, which rumbled down through the department of the interior till every part of his big frame was shaking. "Gad!" he ejaculated aloud, "what a lot I've been missing these five and twenty years! This Christmas business is great stuff. I wouldn't take a hundred thousand dollars for the fun I have had during the past half hour, and it only cost me five per cent. of a hundred thousand to get it."

Temporarily the mask had fallen and this was no longer Hungerford the Banker; it was Hungerford the Man.

By dint of hard work and much picturesque profanity old Peter accomplished the impossible, the trunks were ready on time and with great dignity he escorted his master into a Pullman drawing room at 3:30 that afternoon.

It was with some misgivings that three days

later Mr. Hungerford entered upon the last stage of his journey, boarding a late afternoon train at Boston for the hundred mile run to his home town. Everything seemed so new and strange that he felt it had all outgrown him. He wondered if, after all, he hadn't been foolish to rush back here unheralded and unprepared? Perhaps it would have been wiser first to have located some of his old friends by correspondence. But it was too late for that now, and he would take things as he found them. In a few hours he would be home. For the past three days he had pictured the straggling village of the long ago, its little one-story red depot, with the water tank just across the tracks, and the old yellow bus in which he would ride up street to the Mansion House, where two girls in calico frocks and white aprons did all the dining room work and had plenty of time left over to flirt with the Boston drummers. A thousand little details of his boyhood days, long buried, were now unearthed, and his mind was busily reconstructing memories, when old Peter aroused him from his reverie.

"We has arriv, sah, and she sut'nly do look like purty considerable of er town."

Through the window shone the glare of the brilliantly lighted station, while as they passed out the clang of electric cars and the raucous

voices of cabbies assailed his ears. Passing through the spacious and well appointed waiting rooms, he called the nearest cab and directed the driver to take them to the Mansion House. "Why, that old hashery was tore down fifteen year ago," explained the astonished Jehu, as he added, "the New Arlington is the best hotel in the city, sir. Want to go there?" Plainly bewildered, Mr. Hungerford nodded assent and entered the cab, to be driven through crowded and noisy streets to his hotel.

This was not the Waterford he had known; the sleepy little village had given place to a city of paved streets with towering structures on either side, and showy shops and much plate glass.

In the privacy of his own apartment at the hotel Mr. Hungerford gave himself up to gloomy thoughts. For years he had been too busy to think of it, and now for the first time was borne in upon him, bitterly and uncompromisingly, the fact that he was no longer young, that the days he had dreamed of were gone from him forever, vanished into the wide eternity of the past. Humbled and chastened he sought his bed, to toss uneasily through the long night. With the morning came clearer vision, and systematically he set about the work of looking up such of his old friends as might still be found in Waterford.

Long and earnestly he scanned the pages of the City Directory which Peter brought to him. Again and again he turned disappointed from its pages, unable to find the name he sought. At last he found the name of Rev. John Horner. It didn't seem likely or probable that Jack Horner had turned out to be a preacher, but this name and address seemed his only hope.

Calling a cab, he drove to the address. It was in the unfashionable quarter of the town that he found the poor little cottage. Answering his ring came a white-haired, gentle-faced woman who, in response to his query, replied that Mr. Horner would see him.

Entering the room, Mr. Hungerford's glance at one sweep took in the worn furniture, the frayed curtains and all the shabby gentility of the apartment, then rested upon the bent and fragile figure of a man, unmistakably an invalid, who sat very near the tiny stove.

Surely, this couldn't be Jack Horner, little Jack of the Eleven! And yet—yes, those were the same old honest brown eyes. "Jack," he said, and his voice was strangely husky, "have you no welcome for me? I have traveled a long way to see you."

The invalid looked interested and bowed courteously, but there was no flash of recognition over

the delicate mobile face, as he said, "Will you be seated, sir? I fear, however, that you are mistaken as to my identity, as I don't recall having met you before."

Leaning forward, the big man grasped both the thin, weak hands and lifted the invalid to his feet. "Look again, Jack. Have you wholly forgotten the lad who played center on the old team?"

Ah! he remembered now, for the thin arms were about Mr. Hungerford's neck and the wasted figure was leaning heavily upon him, as he sobbed out, "Billy Hungerford! good old Billy! the best man on the team and the best friend of my boyhood! We thought you were dead, Billy boy, and now after all these years you come back to find me sadly broken in body and spirit, but very happy to have you again. Sit me down again, old man, and tell me the whole story, all of it."

All that day and far into the evening the two old boys talked together, and each told his tale. Jack had entered the ministry, and, after years of brilliant and successful work in a distant city, had broken down physically and had been placed on the superannuated list. The pittance which he now received barely sufficed to keep them in the tiny cottage and they were sorely pinched at times, but too proud to ask for help. "When I gave up my work I came back here to finish my

days among my old friends, but some of the old crowd are dead, some have moved elsewhere. Those who are here come to see me occasionally, but of course I never tell them of my circumstances. Wouldn't have told you, Billy, if you hadn't just dug it out of me."

"Humph!" snorted Mr. Hungerford; "it strikes me that some of the others might have dug a bit, too."

After the frugal dinner that evening Mr. Hungerford began asking, one by one, after the members of the old class. From Jack he learned this one had moved to Boston, another lived in Elmira, N. Y.; this girl had married Mr. So and So, the lawyer, and that one had died years ago. At last the list seemed finished, as Mr. Hungerford inquired no further. Then the Rev. John Horner's eyes twinkled mischievously, as he said, "and last of all comes Polly Emerson. How is it you failed to ask of her, Billy? I thought you and she were once sweethearts."

For the life of him he couldn't keep the telltale color down, and Mr. Hungerford blushed furiously. "Well, how about her? Married, I suppose?" he asked brusquely.

No, she had never married. Since her father's death she had made her home in another town, about thirty miles distant, and she was just as

pretty as ever, at that; though of course her hair was now almost white. When Jack had last seen her, a few months before, they had spoken of Billy and had concluded that he was dead, since neither had heard of him during all these years.

Before Mr. Hungerford left the Horner cottage that night his head and Jack's were very near together, as they plotted and planned the enterprise proposed by the banker. "Jack," he had said, "I want to get the old crowd together once more. I want to have a high old Christmas jinks, but I am not to be known in the matter till the evening of the blowout. I'll do all the work and make all the necessary arrangements, but the invitations must come from you." It was so arranged and Mr. Hungerford went back to his hotel. He slept amazingly well that night, although he dreamed much of a rosy cheeked girl whose hair was strangely silvered.

Next day Mr. Horner sent for the manager of the Arlington Hotel and engaged the banquet hall and reception rooms for the evening of December twenty-fourth. The hotel man, after looking about the humble abode, began to explain that such transactions were usually upon a cash basis, etc., but Mr. Horner cut him short by laying a hundred dollar bill in his hand and telling him that the

details of arrangements would be sent a few days later.

Mr. Hungerford spent a couple of days in Boston, during which time he arranged with a caterer to serve a most elaborate banquet at Mr. Horner's party. He also held a heated session with the director of the Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Hungerford wanted a certain musical programme which should be rendered before and during the banquet, after which he wanted dance music for the cotillion to follow. When the director scanned the list which Mr. Hungerford submitted he threw up his hands in holy horror. "Why, my dear sir," he explained, "this programme is impossible, simply impossible. Many of these things have been out of print and forgotten for twenty years. Now, if you would permit me to select a suitable programme, I would say——"

The steely look in Mr. Hungerford's eyes silenced him. "What sum was it you demanded for the services of yourself and orchestra for the evening of the twenty-fourth?" icily demanded the banker. The professor again named the amount. "Very good; just look over that list and within an hour report to me at the Touraine. If you can't furnish the music, I'll find an orchestra leader who can," and the door slammed behind the bulky figure. Herr Professor of the Sym-

phony Orchestra reconsidered, and an hour later reported that the programme would be rendered as desired.

Soon after this appeared a very dainty and elaborate invitation, which stated that the Rev. John Horner desired the presence of each survivor of the Waterford High School class of 1874 at a class reunion to be held at the Arlington on Christmas eve, December twenty-fourth, 1905. The wife or husband (if any) of each class member was included in the invitation, and it was the Rev. Horner's most earnest wish that his old classmates would make every effort to be present upon the occasion, which he assured them would be quite out of the ordinary, to say the least.

These invitations, bearing as they did the hall mark of swelldom, created no little comment among the old class, and when the local newspapers began a few days later to hint vaguely at the sumptuous preparations for Mr. Horner's Christmas party, the community was agog with curiosity.

The bustle and excitement of it all seemed to act as a tonic upon Jack, for he gained strength daily and was soon able to drive out each day in the sleigh which Mr. Hungerford regularly sent to the door.

On the morning of December twenty-third the

banquet hall and reception rooms of the Arlington were taken possession of by the florists and caterers from Boston. All that day and the next they worked, while about the town it was rumored that a carload of rare plants and beautiful flowers had been used in the decorations.

During this time Mr. Hungerford had effaced himself wholly, spending his days in his apartment and consulting Mr. Horner only late in the evenings.

On the twenty-fourth the afternoon trains brought in class members from other cities, also the Herr Professor with his Symphony Orchestra from Boston, all of which created a veritable furore in the usually staid city of Waterford.

“Um—the Symphony Orchestra from Boston, and a whole carload of flowers! What do you think of that? Ain’t the Rev. Horner doin’ it up brown, though?” This and kindred remarks might have been heard about the lobby of the hotel and upon the streets that afternoon.

At last the hour came, and, with Jack and Mrs. Horner to assist, Mr. Hungerford stood at the upper end of the long reception room to receive his guests. Old Peter, resplendent in new broadcloth and immaculate gloves, pompously announced and ushered in each arrival.

First to enter were the two Anderson girls,

now plump matrons, each with her husband. "Do you recognize 'em, Billy?" whispered Jack. Oh, yes! he knew them, and he found them just as noisy and good natured as ever when Jack had discovered to them the identity of the big, handsome stranger, for they nearly shook his arms off and were smothering him with questions when fresh arrivals gave him the opportunity to escape.

Ah! here comes Tom Pickford, "Big Pick," bigger than ever and seemingly stronger, for he gave his old chum the hug of a bear the moment he heard his name.

Kate Danforth! My! my! how young Kate looked after so long a time. She was overjoyed to meet him again and kissed him a couple of times, just for "good count," as she laughingly explained to her husband, the dignified doctor.

The guests were arriving rapidly and within a half hour nearly two score had been announced. Mr. Hungerford was constantly the center of a curious crowd of questioners, yet his glance wandered often to the doorway, as if in search of some new face. Finally it came, and as old Peter, in the same tones he might have used in calling a carriage, announced "Miss Emmahson," the banker turned to face the stately and graceful figure which was advancing up the room.

Gad! how tall and queenly she was, with her

snowy hair and the bloom of perfect health in her cheek! Not a bit like the little Polly he had known, nor yet like the woman of his dreams; but something richer, and warmer and finer, something after the order of the Gainsborough portrait he had seen at the Art Institute last week. As Miss Emerson approached Mr. Horner stepped forward to greet her; then turning, he said, "and, Polly, this is a friend to whom you need no introduction." As she looked into Mr. Hungerford's face the color suddenly fled from the glowing cheek; then into the beautiful eyes flashed, in quick succession, doubt, incredulity, recognition and joy almost too great to be borne. She wavered unsteadily for a moment before she clasped the proffered hand and stammered, "I—I—oh Billy! is it really you?"

"It is I, Polly," responded the big man, and, ignoring the curious crowd of friends, he took her in his arms and kissed her, once, twice, thrice, that she might be sure that Billy had returned to her.

There was no lack of color in her cheeks now, and her eyes were swimming as she gently disengaged herself from his arms. "It wasn't quite fair, Billy. You should have prepared me for your coming. I never expected to see you again."

It was a moment pregnant with possibilities. Mr. Hungerford never knew just what he might

have said in response, when the folding doors swung back, disclosing the banquet hall, a fairy-land of ferns and flowers, and dinner was announced.

As Mr. Hungerford slipped Polly's hand through his arm and led the way, from somewhere in that wilderness of vines and blossoming things a concealed orchestra burst into the rollicking strains "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," and to the inspiring strains of that well nigh forgotten old war song the banker led his guests to the feast.

And what a feast it was! Dainties from far-off lands and seas graced the board, while rare vintages bubbled their generous welcome to the guests. How the old eyes sparkled as the toasts were drunk and wits were loosed in many a jest and story, while through the leafy screen drifted down upon the diners the quaint, sweet strains from half remembered love songs of the long ago. As he looked down the splendid room and into the faces of his friends, or into the shining eyes of this wonderful woman at his side, there was a great, glad song in William Hungerford's heart, and he was very happy—happier than at any time through the long years of his life. To himself he whispered, "it pays! it pays!"

For more than an hour the feasting and laugh-

ter went on, then all eyes were turned to the head of the table as the host arose. For a little time he stood silent, then with voice vibrant with emotion he spoke.

“My friends, the old friends of my boyhood, and their alliances, the newer friends whom I meet for the first time, you can have little conception of the deep welcome my heart sends out to you. It is the proudest and happiest moment of my life. It is but natural that you should be curious as to the happenings in the three decades which have passed since I left Waterford, a homeless and penniless wanderer, and, as briefly as may be, you shall have the story.”

Then he told them of the pitiless grind of his earlier years in the west, of his hopes and his disappointments, how penury had chilled the nobler ambitions and had turned the whole current of his aims into the channel of money-getting; how each defeat had made him more bitter, each success hardening his resolve to be rich. How at length success came to him, and then his plans and schemes to double, treble and quadruple his gains. More and more far-reaching had become his enterprises, till he had won a place among the leaders in the business world. For the past ten years he had been reckoned as a rich man, yet so sordid had he grown that he entered

more readily than ever into fierce competition for the gold which had become his absorbing passion. Not one jot did he spare himself, as he related how from year to year he had wanted to come back to see them, but that his greed for gain had held him to his money-getting, and he had stilled his heart-hunger by promising himself that next Christmas he would go home. And when another year had sped by, again his business claimed his presence, again his heart must find solace in the oft repeated promise of next Christmas. And so successive Christmas days had come and gone, while his soul shriveled in the ceaseless pursuit of money, till his human side had atrophied and sentiment was well nigh dead. Then he told of the awakening a month previous; how his soul would no longer be denied, and how he had started home. He told them of his arrival amid strange scenes and unknown faces in the home of his youth, of his meeting with Jack, and the plans that they had laid for the present occasion. And now, he said, his story was ended, and he had only to add that he was proud and grateful to welcome them there; grateful for the great joy they had given him, and proud that the ties of his boyhood's friendships had been strong enough to bridge the wide chasm made by thirty years of silence and neglect.

As Mr. Hungerford concluded, from the unseen orchestra came an old familiar air, and in an instant those gray haired boys and girls were frantically waving their handkerchiefs at him and singing, as with one voice, "Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot."

After the song there were speeches from Jack and the other boys, who told him how gladly they welcomed their friend from a far country, even as from the country of the dead, and bade him learn that friendship was more than a mere thing of years.

As he listened to the loving words of comradeship, Mr. Hungerford's heart was very full, and again he whispered, "it pays."

Presently they were summoned to the dancing hall, where they were soon whirling to that masterpiece of rhythmic melody, Strauss' "Beautiful Blue Danube." Some of them were stout and hadn't waltzed for a score of years, yet right bravely they essayed its witching measures, for was not this Billy's party, and weren't they out for the time of their lives? What fun they had in the Virginia Reel and the Lanciers, of which nine out of ten had forgotten the figures. Every number on the programme was an old friend, for the orchestra played the music of the old days, music which brought forth memories long since

laid away in lavender, music which just *made* them dance. And so they danced and gossiped and flirted, just as they had done thirty years ago, and all were the happier for it.

As the dancing drew to an end they heard from an adjoining room the notes of a piano, and then the quavering voice of Jack singing the old class song. Gathering close about him they sang it through, then again, with a fervor and feeling which should abide with each of them so long as memory lived.

But the evening waned and now they gathered about Billy to bid him good-bye and Godspeed, for he had said that on the morrow, Christmas day, he must return to the west. With many assurances of loving friendship and regard they said goodnight, exacting from him the promise that next Christmas he would surely come again.

Presently all had departed save Polly, who was stopping at the hotel, and the Horners. Turning to the little minister, Mr. Hungerford said, "Jack, this climate is too severe for you, and I propose that you migrate to my mountain home. There is in my town a little Gothic church and rectory built of pink granite. It is large enough to accommodate a good-sized congregation, and boasts the best organ in our part of the world. It is non-sectarian and can accommodate itself to any

service. It wants a pastor and will pay you a good living. If you'll take it I will fix matters, and next June, when the breath of the mountains is gentle and the roses are blooming on the trellis of the rectory, you shall come to the hill country and into your new charge. What do you say, old boy?"

There were tears in Jack's eyes, as he replied, "I'll come, Billy—it's the thing I've dreamed of."

As the Horners went for their wraps, Polly whispered, "Is there really such a church there, Billy?" "No, but it will be there when Jack arrives," answered Billy. "I was sure of it," she said. There was a great light on his face as he faced her. "And, now, Polly, I've something to say to you. Possibly my neglect and silence has placed me beyond the pale of your forgiveness; but, Polly, I want you. All these years, down deep under the sordid crust of money-getting, has been one spot in my heart kept clean and sacred. All these years I have loved you and builded in my soul a sanctuary wholly yours. Will you come to dwell therein? Will you come to me?" Her eyes were very beautiful as she gave him her hand and answered, "Yes, Billy, I will come."

"When shall it be, Polly?"

There was a flash of mischief in her eyes when

she said, "as you have for so many years been promising yourself a reward on next Christmas, I will assume that I am a part of that reward, and so we will be married next Christmas."

"You will keep your promise, Polly?"

"If I live, yes."

"Good! It now lacks five minutes of twelve o'clock. Tomorrow will be next Christmas. Jack," he called out, "I want you here at noon tomorrow. Polly and I are to be married."

Jack was there.

